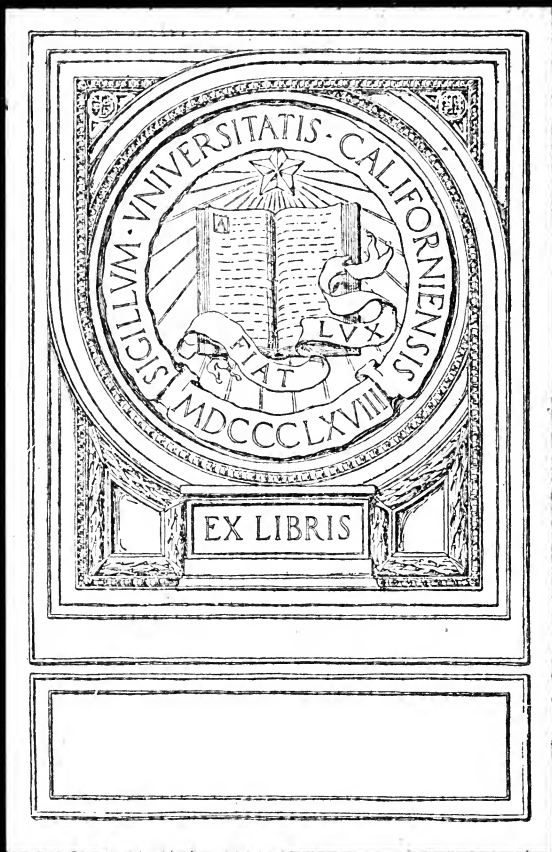


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JOSEPH RAYNER STEPHENS



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L I F E

OF

JOSEPH RAYNER STEPHENS

Ballantyne Press

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THE
CALIFORNIA



70 ANNU
ANNIVERSARY

LIFE OF
JOSEPH RAYNER STEPHENS

Preacher and **P**olitical **O**rator

BY

GEORGE JACOB HOLYOAKE

WITH AN INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER

BY

JOHN STEPHENS STORR

"I, however, aim not so much to prescribe a law for others as to set forth the law of my own mind ; which, let the man who shall have approved of it, abide by ; and let him, to whom it shall appear not reasonable, reject it. It is my earnest wish, I confess, to employ my understanding and acquirements in that mode and direction, in which I may be enabled to benefit the largest number possible of my fellow creatures."—PETRARCH.

WILLIAMS AND NORGATE,
14, HENRIETTA STREET, COVENT GARDEN, LONDON ;
AND 20, SOUTH FREDERICK PLACE, EDINBURGH.

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TO AIR
AIRBORNE

DA531

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S75H6

TO ALL THE
HONEST TOILERS IN THIS LAND OF INDUSTRY,
THIS RECORD OF
A MAN OF WORTH,
IS INSCRIBED.

707011



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INTRODUCTORY.

MY valued friend, Mr. HOLYOAKE, has asked me to write a brief Introduction to this his book.

The working-men and working-women of Lancashire and Yorkshire, among whom my uncle, JOSEPH RAYNER STEPHENS, lived for over forty years, will welcome this record of their guide, teacher and champion: he still lives in the hearts and homes of thousands of our factory hands: many of the bravest and wisest of them looked up to him with loving confidence; and with admiration for his persistent advocacy of all that he believed would tend to make them

better, happier, as servants of God and of man. His influence was not unfelt by the master-class, not a few of whom became his fast friends when they comprehended the wide-spread influence for good which his life gave to the million lives around him. This was his reward.

A strong individuality—not without the consciousness of power and the love of power over men—an intense sympathy with suffering, a chivalrous sense of honour, a passionate hatred of oppression and avarice, a contempt for all that was mean, vulgar, sordid—these were regulated by a deep religious spirit of love for God and for Humanity. Thus, he was a political priest, a soldier-servant of Christ, fighting under the banner of the Cross.

A disregard, so far as he himself was concerned, of what goes by the name of “success in life,” otherwise “money,” or “social position,” led him to say what he had to say, and to do what he had to do, with earnestness and fearlessness: he had moral courage. The part he

played on the world's stage he played to satisfy his conscience and his God.

In politics, his leanings were Conservative. He believed in raising the standard of duty and sense of responsibility in the more educated and high-placed. Perhaps the late Lord Derby and the late John Arthur Roebuck were the public men with whom his heart beat most in unison.

From the pulpit and the platform, in the columns of the press, edited by himself and by others, as well as in his daily familiar intercourse with honest working-folk, he taught them to be "noble, helpful and good." The men to be true men; the women to be true women: he longed that they should have cleaner, healthier bodies, and stout hearts within; then they could respect themselves, and trust in the people's cause. He was no flatterer of the idle, the thriftless, the unwashed.

Few men of this generation spent more

time in reading and in meditation : his gift of conversation was such that he seemed to think aloud ; but he knew how and when to be silent. All who ever heard him, bear witness that his powers as an orator and a preacher were of a very high order ; there was music in his voice, and his lips uttered the convictions of his warm heart and well-cultured mind.

Though life ends, example lives : noble, lofty thoughts and works endure and fructify.

JOHN STEPHENS STORR.

26, KING STREET, COVENT GARDEN, LONDON,
September, 1881.

L I F E

OF

JOSEPH RAYNER STEPHENS.

CHAPTER I,

DIFFICULTIES OF THE STORY.

THE motto on the title-page of this record expresses in the words of Petrarch exactly the character of Mr. Stephens's mind. The passage describes him as he permanently was. His inspiration in his early days, his independence in mature life, and the fine charity of his later years, are all depicted there. He was essentially a setter-forth of "the law in his own mind." His merit was that he had a law there ; and he had the generous passion, not at all common even now, of setting forth, for the instruction and guidance of others, what he felt to be good for himself. Joseph Rayner Stephens was a man who united to this rare quality original capacity, a splendid eloquence, and fearless public service. He should not pass entirely from the grateful memory of Englishmen.

The idea of this Biography did not originate with Mr. Stephens's family : whatever conviction they cherished of his personal worth and public usefulness, they had no intention of recording it, until neighbours, disciples, and followers of Mr. Stephens, out of gratitude for his public services, began to take steps to erect a statue to his memory : this they wished to see placed in the park at Staleybridge, the town where so many years of his life had been spent, and for the welfare of whose people he had laboured so assiduously, and among whom he died.

As the present writer had known Mr. Stephens in his earlier and later career, and withal had great personal regard for him, it was thought well that he should give some short account, which might inform those of this generation who might be curious to learn the facts of Mr. Stephens's life, what manner of man he was, what kind of services he rendered, and what difficulties he confronted in the discharge of duties which his sense of humanity imposed upon him in evil days, when only a brave and generous man in his position would have cast in his lot with the poor and friendless.

As public gratitude has accorded a statue to Richard Oastler at Bradford, at the instigation and with the concurrence and aid of many who never shared his particular opinions, either political or social, but who greatly honoured his remarkable devotion to the welfare of factory children ; it seems likely that

many would be willing to promote a similar tribute to Joseph Rayner Stephens, who was the mightiest colleague of Oastler ; who stood by him when living, who shared his labours, who was his counsellor in his work, and who incurred imprisonment for the cause (a penalty which Oastler escaped), who vindicated his memory when dead ; and, what is more, carried on the defence of the same great question when Richard Oastler had passed away.

The teachings of Joseph Rayner Stephens exist mainly in the memories of men of the older political generation. Personal records of his career are scant indeed. He was always careless of himself, and was bent rather on the work he strove to do than on thoughts of his own reputation. He collected no materials from which others could glean the story of his days. He therefore seems more deserving than many others of some record, from having been through life so generously negligent of himself. An orator, like a great singer, or a great actor, often leaves behind him nothing save the memory of his mighty voice, which dies with the generation which heard it : that reputation is so ample and so satisfactory while the orator lives, that he is apt to forget that it will cease when he dies, and makes no provision for perpetuating it. The greater the popularity he acquires, the more it imposes upon him the belief that his repute will take care of itself, and inspires him with a proud abandon-

ment of all the conditions of lasting fame. Some great sermons by Mr. Stephens, which those who were present always regarded as the distinction of their lives to have heard, were probably printed, with more or less fulness, but no copy of the most famous can now be obtained. His great speeches against the Poor Law, which, as I know, moved workmen in Midland England as they did the men of Yorkshire and Lancashire, are now mostly lost, even such as were reported. Reporting then was not the great art it now is. Besides, there was no cheap press in those days. Newspapers were mainly in the hands of the middle, and what then passed for the "upper," classes; and the insurgent eloquence of Joseph Rayner Stephens in defence of the poor found small favour in their sight, and scant reports in their columns. How little publicity he was likely to obtain in these quarters is shown in the fact that in 1838 "the leading mill-owners of Staleybridge, with one or two exceptions, avowed openly their intention to discharge from their employment, and prevent their obtaining employment elsewhere, all who were known to be hearers or supporters of Mr. Stephens."* The memorable agitation for the "Ten Hours Bill"—a measure for limiting labour in factories to that duration—occupied thirty-three years. It ended in 1848 by the passing of what was known as "John Fielden's Bill."

* Hand-bill, signed "Geo. Nield" and "John Durham."

In 1837, the representation of working-class questions in the Press was so partial and precarious, that Feargus O'Connor, a friend of Mr. Stephens, commenced in the November of that year the *Northern Star* newspaper, published at Leeds. Yet this paper could do but little, as its efforts were limited by law. There were taxes on knowledge in those days. It was the common complaint of the governing class that the people were dangerous because they were ignorant, yet a tax was imposed on all who sought to give them information. The first words of Mr. O'Connor on the first page of the first number of the *Northern Star* were these :—

“Reader, behold that little red spot in the corner of my newspaper. That is the stamp ; the Whig *beauty* spot ; your *plague* spot. Look at it : I am entitled to it upon the performance of certain conditions. I was ready to comply, and yet, will you believe, that the little spot you see has cost me nearly eighty pounds in money, together with much anxiety, and nearly one thousand miles of night and day travelling ; of this they shall hear more, but for the present suffice it to say—there it is : it is my license to teach.” *

It was of the nature of a new tax on working men when the *Northern Star* did appear, seeing that they alone would buy it, and its price was thus made fourpence-halfpenny ; the penny stamp cost the pur-

* *Northern Star*, No. 1, Nov. 18, 1837.

chaser twopence, as the issuer of the paper had to pay for all stamps, whether the papers bearing them were sold or not. Though every copy of the *Star* was taxed, it increased the amount of public light, and is the best record of Mr. Stephens's speeches now extant.

In those days there were no "Men of the Time," like the now indispensable volume edited by Thompson Cooper; no "Biograph," like that issued by Joshua Hutton; no record of "Men of Mark" was then attempted; and if the "men of mark" were men of the people, there were few who were curious for information concerning them. The story of the life of Joseph Rayner Stephens, so far as it can be known now, is told here for the first time.

CHAPTER II.

PARENTAGE AND BIRTH OF JOSEPH RAYNER
STEPHENS.

JOHN STEPHENS, the father of the subject of these pages, was born in Cornwall in 1772. Early in life he acquired deep religious convictions when connected with the Episcopal Church, of which he always remained a member and a lover. But in his youth the Episcopal Church was sleeping, and he joined the Methodist Society, and "gave himself," as he expressed it, "to the service of God." In 1792, when little more than twenty years of age, he was admitted, at a Conference of that body, as a candidate for the ministry, and commenced itinerant duties at Penzance. He became a distinguished preacher, and in due course filled some of the most important stations in England and North Britain. His wide reading, exceptional talents, power over the deeper feelings of his congregations, and spotless public and private character, carried him onwards to

positions of honour and trust. His pastoral administrations were based on the Gospel of Christ, not on the Law of Moses. He exercised wide influence over all classes, and wrote both in prose and verse works that were useful at the time. He had a clear and comprehensive understanding ; in argument he was lucid—his illustrations of Scripture were strikingly apt ; his manner in the pulpit serious and dignified ; and his language had the completeness and impressiveness only possible to men of capacity and sincerity. In 1827, when Connexional principles were considered to be in jeopardy, he was elected President of the Conference, in which office he manifested such soundness of judgment, moral courage, and command of temper, that the Conference of 1828 passed and published a vote of “cordial and unreserved thanks” to him. Though of a kind and obliging disposition, he could never be induced to sacrifice principle either to expediency or popular favour, and adhered to what he thought right with undeviating firmness. On his first entrance upon the ministry he was regarded as a man of superior intellect, and he had the good sense, unusual in those days for one in his position, to devote much of his time to the pursuit of useful learning and general knowledge, and thus he acquired what never forsook him, a Catholic charity towards all denominations of Christians. He died at Brixton Hill, London, in

January, 1841, in the 69th year of his age, and 48th of his ministry.

The last hours of Mr. Stephens's life were characterized by his accustomed calmness and good sense. His solicitor* relates, that on the 28th of January he was asked to prepare and bring him his will. On receiving it Mr. Stephens requested two of his neighbours to be called in, and sitting up, told them, in his usual strong and sonorous voice, that having some property to dispose of, he felt it his duty to make his will, and wished them to attest his signature. This act performed, he said "farewell" to those around him, asked to be left alone for a few minutes, rose from his bed, and without help bathed himself, so that (in his own words) "he might die clean." He died the next midnight. A brief but well-written obituary notice of him appears in the "Minutes of the Methodist Conferences," volume ix., 1843, which records that when a great emergency arose, the reserved force of his nature became apparent, and he would speak with "overpowering eloquence." This capacity of rising to the demands of emergency is a natural sign of power. Emergency, which is the end of the weak man, is the opportunity of the strong. A Tablet on a wall of the Burial Ground, Wesleyan Chapel, City Road, London, bears this inscription :—

* Mr. Greaves Walker.

BENEATH THIS STONE LIE THE MORTAL REMAINS OF
THE REV. JOHN STEPHENS,

Who, for 48 years
Laboured in the Ministry of the Word of Life,
Devoting to his labours
A mind and spirit of sterling but unobtrusive worth.

*He was born on the 8th of February, 1772,
and died, exchanging Mortality for Life, on the
29th day of January, 1841,
in his 69th year.*

His wife, Rebecca Eliza Rayner, to whom he was married at Weathersfield, in Essex, by the Rev. Dr. Jowets, on the 2nd of July, 1796, came of an Essex yeoman family of the old school—upright, honest, and hardworking. Her youngest son says of her: “Miss Rebecca inherited the good qualities of her house, was wonderfully active, thought of others first, and herself last, and was ‘the lady bountiful’ of the neighbourhood wherever she came. She was always considered not less remarkable than her husband, in her way. She had great animation, courage, and determination of character.” When funds were needed for the enlargement of Lambeth Chapel, she collected so considerable an amount, that a silver tea-service was presented to her, in acknowledgment of her remarkable exertions. At a time when Methodism was regarded with small favour in what is called “Society,” she made visits to households of good family outside the Wesleyan body, and such was her bright persuasiveness, that she

obtained gifts from many of them. It is related of her, that often when cases of sudden distress overtook persons known to her, which her immediate resources did not enable her to relieve, she would pledge the silver tea-service for ten pounds, and give or lend the proceeds. When the service came into her possession again, and needs of others arose which she was unable to supply, she would repeat the process of parting with her tea-service, which many times underwent this singular and generous exile from her table. Such were the parents of Joseph Rayner Stephens, who was the sixth of twelve children.

Of this family of twelve, eight were sons and four were daughters.

His sister, Rebecca Eliza, who became Mrs. Storr, by marriage with Mr. William Brumfitt Storr, of London, showed that vigour of character and singular capacity of speech was not confined to sons of the family. She had a fine voice and an eye that arrested attention when she spoke. Fond of sacred literature—and she seldom spoke long without some reference to religion—her language was moulded upon that of the Old Testament. It is not enough to say she knew the Bible by heart—it seemed her natural tongue. Her aptness in using it was so original, fit and expressive, and she spoke withal in so commanding a way ; so direct and authoritative—that she reminded the hearer of Deborah, a prophetess in Israel. What she said was intermingled with remarks of singular

worldly shrewdness. Her conversation, perfectly and obviously earnest, was entirely free from the insipidity of ordinary serious people ; it had a spontaneity and a sort of poetic fire in it. Had she been a preacher she would have excelled both her father and her brother Joseph, in the power of arresting attention. Yet her manner and her imagination were entirely and always womanly. She died, May 1, 1877, in her seventy-seventh year.

John Stephens, the seventh child, was born at North Shields, September 30, 1806, and became editor of the *Christian Advocate*, a Wesleyan periodical of great note and influence while in his hands. In later years he founded *The Adelaide Observer* newspaper, in Adelaide, South Australia.

Edward Stephens, the tenth child, was born at London, October 19, 1811, and baptized at St. George's Chapel in the East, March 1, 1812, by the Rev. John Barber. He held in early life several offices with great credit in the Hull Banking Company, and when twenty-five years of age, he went out to Adelaide and founded the Bank of South Australia (that was in July, 1836), in which country he achieved fortune and great public repute. He continued with the bank until 1855, and died in England, March 12, 1861 : his colonial career was one of considerable distinction.

The *Banker's Magazine* used precisely the same phrase in describing him which the Wesleyan Con-

ference had many years before used as to his father—namely, that “he was equal to any emergency.” The Directors of the Company to which he belonged were the fathers of Australian banking. In his early connection with the Company, Edward Stephens experienced the vicissitudes of the young colony. He conducted his business under a tent, having a sand-hill for his first desk. Speculations of the time, disturbances among the colonists, financial errors of the Government, often produced great loss to his bank. His closing report, when he retired from the management in 1855, was long remembered by those who received it. He resigned his post with “the bank in a state of almost perfect efficiency, enjoying the confidence of the people, doing a very large amount of steady and profitable business with competent men, competent means, and a building and appliances well combined and substantial.” These points had been with him a strong ambition; they express what he had toiled for, and were his reward. There was a tone of pathos in his last words. He remarked that “what we do for the last time is always done with sorrow and sadness, and recalls other days—days not to return.”

George Stephens, the eleventh child, was born in New Street, Liverpool, December 13, 1813, became the most eminent of the family, and in point of learning excelled them all; he has long held the Chair of English literature at the University of Copenhagen.

Professor Dr. George Stephens, F.S.A., is regarded as the first Runic scholar in Europe. He has published several learned works, notably "The old Runic Monuments of Scandinavia and England," three large folio volumes of which have already been printed. The last is entitled, "Tordneren Thor," or "Thunor the Thunderer, carved on a Scandinavian Font, of about the year 1000. The first-found God-Figure of our Scando-Gothic forefathers."* As an Author his style excels in terse, vigorous and picturesque sentences. Besides the antiquarian volumes, Professor Stephens has exercised considerable influence on the politics of the North of Europe in a sense favourable to the union of the Scandinavian kingdoms with Great Britain.

* Published by Williams & Norgate, London. It has many fine illustrations.

CHAPTER III.

HIS MINISTERIAL CAREER—SWEDISH AND ENGLISH.

JOSEPH RAYNER STEPHENS—born in Edinburgh, March 8, 1805—had, to use the language of his distinguished brother, Prof. George Stephens, “the family gifts,” and naturally followed the family traditions. But he lived in a very different period, was educated in all the wisdom of the nineteenth century, became a linguist, a politician, a student of Social Economy, was versed in all the subtleties of logic and metaphysics, spent many years abroad, and drifted away from the narrow moorings of the Wesleyan sect. He worked for his country, and especially for the moral and social uplifting of the people. With his great heart and will he joined in the crusade against the abuses of capital, and the cruelties of the Lancashire Factory System. Joseph Rayner Stephens chose the profession of his father, and became a Wesleyan preacher. He was received on trial at the Bristol Conference, in July, 1825,* when he was in his twentieth year, the precise age

* See “Minutes of Conference,” vol. vi. pp. 4, 26.

at which his father commenced his ministerial career. His station was Beverley, in the Hull district, and he had for a colleague Richard Treffry, known as the author of "The Eternal Soulship."

The Rev. John Stephens being then resident in Manchester, his son Joseph entered the Grammar School in 1819, and formed a friendship with Harrison Ainsworth and Samuel Warren, also a fellow-student there then, and Joseph took part in the private theatricals which were got up by the future novelists. They had many literary tastes in common, and wrote a good deal together in imitation of the earlier dramatists. Mr. Stephens's dramatic tastes became of great advantage to him as a preacher, as the like has proved to other preachers. Mr. Stephens was also a student at Woodhouse Grove, near Leeds. At eighteen years of age, instead of going to college, as his father wished, and strongly advised him to do, he joined Mr. Green of Cottingham, near Hull, where for some time he was one of the masters, and Mrs. Earle, his daughter, relates, "I have often heard him say that he had to sit up and study hard two or three nights a week, to keep himself ahead of the young men he had to teach. Grandpapa sent him the money for the expenses of his first term at college, but my father returned it to him with the answer that his many younger brothers and sisters (there were then seven of them), should never have it to

say that he had more money spent on his education than they had on theirs."

In 1826 he was appointed to the mission station at Stockholm, Sweden, where he ministered until 1830.*

At Stockholm he had opportunities for the prosecution of those linguistic and literary studies in which he always delighted. He learned many languages—Danish, Finnish, besides Swedish, in which he preached. When visiting a new country his plan was first to write out essential phrases of conversation in the tongue of the people, find out some intelligent person to read them to him ; and watch carefully the manner in which the lips moved, or the mouth changed in pronouncing the words ; in the same way in which the deaf and dumb have since been taught to speak. By these means Mr. Stephens acquired a fluent conversational knowledge of a new language in a short time. One result of his acquaintance with northern literature was to communicate his love for it to his younger brother, Professor George Stephens now of Copenhagen, whose early work, the translation of Frithiof's "Saga," was deemed the best by Tegner.

Mr. Stephens's career in Stockholm deserves the attention of the reader—not merely because it had great influence over his future life, not merely

* *Vide* "Minutes of Conference," vol. vi. pp. 137, 246, 366 and 477.

because it is remarkable in itself as respects the distinguished connections he formed, and the repute he acquired when still a young man ; but because his Swedish career was not much known to his countrymen at home, who regarded him only as a preacher and political orator, with, as they believed, but the ordinary attainments and experience of an English Wesleyan minister of the period.

When Mr. Stephens first went to Stockholm in 1826, the Wesleyan society there appears to have consisted of but a few persons, mostly English, who met in a small room which they hired. As at home, the Wesleyans in Sweden were not favoured much by the authorities. It was thought their prospects would be improved if one sermon on Sunday was preached in the Swedish language, which would enable the people of Stockholm, who might choose to become hearers, to form an opinion themselves of the character of Wesleyanism. Mr. Stephens, therefore, preached once a week in Swedish, and was probably the first who did so. Lord Bloomfield, who was then our Minister at the Court, assisted Mr. Stephens in his efforts, and to strengthen his *status*, and in a manner lend official authority to his proceedings, connected him with the Embassy, as his chaplain, and Mr. Stephens read prayers daily in his house. When illness overtook Lord Bloomfield, Mr. Stephens was present, and held his hand as he died.

The great interest Lord Bloomfield, and the

affectionate regard he had for the young preacher, will be sufficiently attested by quoting two letters addressed to him by his lordship :—

“Stockholm, June 5, 1829.

“DEAR MR. STEPHENS,

“In offering for your acceptance the enclosed, I claim your indulgence and forgiveness. It is but a faint acknowledgment for the services you have rendered me, and for the peace which, under God, you have administered to my wounded heart.

“I shall look with no little solicitude for your return after, I hope, an agreeable and interesting journey.

“I remain, yours very truly and obliged,

“BLOOMFIELD.”

“Stockholm, Nov. 13, 1829.

“DEAR MR. STEPHENS,

“I have anxiously followed you in your journey and voyage, and if you should have had the winds that have blown here, you are now far advanced on England's coast. I shall be very glad to know of your safety, and that everything has turned out to your satisfaction on your arrival.

“By the last mail I sent eight volumes of Mants' Bible to your address, and now send the remaining

nine, both parcels to remain with John Bidwell, Esq., at the Foreign Office, *until called for*. I shall not complain of an early execution of the binding, as I long to have the work in my constant keeping. I finished the Revelations, the beginning of which I should never have understood but for the notes and their construction on the text. The latter chapters are of deep interest and easy of comprehension. I need not add how sincerely I desire that your return here may suit your own wishes, or that any project may be realized. I shall always look back to our intercourse as the most important of my life, and I trust whatever of profit I may have gathered is permanently established in my heart.

“Believe me, very truly yours,

“BLOOMFIELD.”

“Mr. Douglas is on his road hither—he is very well. The Captains desire their remembrances to you.

“B.”

Nor are proofs wanting of the esteem in which he was held as a minister by some hearers, who though of venerable years had not less conceived admiration for the ministerial ability and personal integrity of the young preacher. The following letter was written in a hand of singular neatness and exactitude of penmanship :—

“Arbogu and Nasby, Sept. 18, 1827.

REVD. AND DEAR SIR,

“I am very sorry that my advanced age, and some circumstances, especially originated from a greater repair of my dwelling-house, have not permitted me to accomplish my design of going to Stockholm this summer, to see and hear you and imbibe your religious and edifying principles. You find therefore truth of what is usually spoken : *homo proposit, Deus disponit*.

“The bearer of these few lines is my youngest son James Joseph Swederus, who will look after some employment by any of the wholesale merchants in Stockholm : he will present my best compliments to you, and beg your leave to wait on you now and then, and to be one of your hearers in your chapel, if he comes to stay in Stockholm.

“I should be exceedingly glad if your time and functionary performances would permit you to spend some days with me in the country, I should look on it as the greatest favour bestowed on me.

“The steam-ship *Josephine* or *Yngwe Frey* would carry you safe and sound to Arbogu, and from thence I'll take care of your carrying thither, when I'm advertised of the day of your embarking from Stockholm and of the steam-ship with which you are going.

“Two of my other sons will go from Stockholm with *Josephine* next Tuesday, the 25th of this month. How happy should they be of your company on that very steam-ship in their returning home !

“Do come, dear sir, in my house, and you shall be received with the warmest friendship.

“With the greatest esteem, I am,

“Dear and revd. sir,

“Your most humble servant,

“RIC. JAM. SWEDERUS.”

One further testimony of Mr. Stephens's distinction and usefulness is the following, of which any preacher of the greatest repute might be proud.

Extract of a Letter from the Right Hon. the Countess von Schwerin to the Rev. J. P. Waklin, Chaplain in Ordinary to the King of Sweden, and to his Embassy in London, dated Stockholm the 12th of January, 1827.

“Mr. Stephens, who now twice every Lord's Day, preaches and performs divine service here (the Church of England prayers are also read), gains more and more upon the affection of the folks here, and increases the number of his friends. I owe you, my good Mr. Waklin, the sincerest thanks for having introduced this estimable and most excellent man to my acquaintance. I have scarcely missed hearing a single one of his sermons; and, to tell you the truth, if anything can be said to engage my interest in it beyond this, it is to find that my dear son-in-law hears Mr. Stephens with so much pleasure, that he very seldom loses any opportunity of attending divine service.

Mr. Stephens has made so extraordinary quick progress in the acquirement of the Swedish language, that he can without difficulty converse upon any subject, and pronounces the language with a propriety and correctness truly astonishing for the short time he has been here. The saloon which Count Caol de Geer-Grant has lent, free of expense to the Methodist congregation, is a tolerably good shift for a chapel. It is of sufficient height and moderately large, and most delightfully situate in a large garden also belonging to Count de Geer-Grant. Many Swedes of whom till now I and others had no idea of their understanding English, are amongst his *diligent* hearers. I own I long for the time when, on account of still more extensive usefulness, he shall feel himself at liberty also to preach to us in Swedish. I wait almost impatiently for your letters and the books you have promised to send me about the great and mighty doings going on in England for the Redeemer's glory. Are they so sensible as they ought to be of their Christian privileges?"*

One further letter may complete the story of Mr. Stephens's years in Sweden—a letter which has historic interest, as throwing light upon the youthful mind of a Catholic peer, Count de Montalembert. The letter is written partly in French and partly in English:—

* Translated from the Swedish.

“Eolskulle, near Stockholm, July 26, 1829.

“MY DEAR STEPHENS,

“I have been long waiting for a letter from you. It would have been a comfort and a pleasure to see the promise of a friend fulfilled, and to receive some words of affection and sympathy in the midst of my too real misfortunes. I might with justice be very angry with you ; I am not, however (not at all, out of friendship or Christian meekness), because I am too low spirited, too miserable to entertain any bitter feeling against anyone but myself and my destiny.

“On the 9th of June, the very night of your departure, my poor sister was seized with an inflammatory attack, more violent than any we had yet witnessed. Since that day she has been in a state of positive danger and unremitting sufferings ; we have tried the country air, but nature has not made the least effort to conquer the malady, and art has been totally at a loss not only to remedy, but even to account for, the extraordinary symptoms we have seen.

“Lord Bloomfield will give you as complete a description as you can desire. He has seen us in our most painful moments. He has really been *the good Samaritan*, the true Christian's friend and adviser ; guilty, indeed, should we be before God and man if we were ever, or any of us, to forget his perpetual and unchangeable kindness.

“Allow me, therefore, my dear friend, to quit this subject. It would not, however, be fulfilling my duty to you as a friend, if I were to cast a veil of constrained gaiety over the deep and smarting wounds of my soul. Even when I am able to forget for a moment my misfortunes, of a sudden I am seized by the consciousness of my afflictions, and I feel a sort of remorse for the temporary pleasure I have been enjoying.

“I am sure you will accuse me of exaggeration, foolish forebodings, and God knows what. Would to Heaven that your accusation were true; but unfortunately I am too well paid not to believe in the sincerity of my complaints. If you did but know what a load of bitterness, resentment, and passion lies hid in my heart under the veil of affected gaiety; if you knew how the purest affections of life have been for me blasted to the root; and how, instead of the liberty, and the joy, and the confidence of youth, I have been nurtured up in the midst of humiliations, of hypocrisy, of misery. Oh! then you would understand the extent of my afflictions; you would feel why the ruins of my most cherished plans have reduced me almost to despair; and, above all, you would feel why my heart is so ardent for new friends and new affections—is always so ready to seize on sympathy, on confidence, on consolation.

“I have missed you very much, my dear Stephens. I think that if you had been here I should have been

less unhappy ; I should at least have had some one with whom I could have spoken, and who would have freshened up my mind and given me new thoughts and useful encouragement. You would have revived my broken-down spirits ; you would have impressed on my weak soul the will and the providence of Him in whom I can easily believe and hope, but whom I neither love nor confide in enough.

“ In short, I should have had a friend, and I have none. None ! I do not know whether I am really telling the truth in uttering this word. I have long thought, and must still think, that the Countess is my friend ; at least, I know that I am very fond of her. To you even I may say that I love her from the bottom of my heart. Though there is between us so little similitude of age, of position, of temper, disposition, and future views, yet have I felt myself borne towards her by an invisible penchant.

“ My attachment has grown stronger for her every day. I look forward with fear and regret to the moment when I shall part from her, perhaps for life.

“ However, I must not be ungrateful ‘ through an excess of friendship ;’ and whatever may be the Countess’s sentiments towards me, I shall always feel towards her as towards the only person who has thrown some charm over my dreary exile.

“ One would really think that you were a Catholic priest, to see the way in which I am going on confessing to you. But I know not two ways of being

a friend ; ' I am very exacting indeed, because I willingly use the exigency of my friends.' We hope to start for France, and then to Berlin, Dresden, and Frankfort, at the end of next week.

" I have not seen Sheduct for these last six weeks. I have positively done nothing at all. All I have read has been Madame de Staël's *Allemagne*, with which I am delighted, and some numbers of the *Svea*, where I have found some excellent articles of Atterborn.

" Good-bye, my dear Stephens, write to me at Paris often and confidentially.

" ' Remember that I rely upon you.' Our union, our friendship is a debt we owe to the noble cause of *faith*, religious, moral, and political, which we have both embraced, which you proclaim from the altar of the Most High, and which I may perhaps also defend in my country's presence. Let there be between us a tie of sacred sympathy—a tie formed by faith in the same truths, and love for the same virtues—a tie which may yield us some comfort in this world, and not be quite useless to our fate in the next.

" Yours most affectionately,

" C. F. DE MONTALEMBERT."

A year later, namely in 1830, Count Charles Forbes Montalembert united himself with Lamennais in Paris, and was one of the founders of *L'Avenir*

which sought to ally Catholicism to democracy. One of the doctrines of this new school was the liberation of the Gallican church from State control, and when this claim failed, it was sought to free public instruction from government interference. In all these unauthorized agitations, Montalembert never withdrew his allegiance to the Church. By the expression of his sympathies for Ireland and Poland, both of them Roman Catholic countries, he preserved a connection with the democratic party, and on all social questions he advocated the cause of the people.* Montalembert being born in 1810, in London, would be nineteen years old at the date of the remarkable letter to Mr. Stephens. His early years having been spent in London, it was natural that he should be interested in the young English preacher whom he would meet or hear spoken of, as we have seen, in the highest circles of Stockholm. Mr. Stephens being five years the elder, of decided views, full of theories of religious progress, and withal having the commanding inspiration of enthusiasm, eloquence, and a fiery will, he is not unlikely to have influenced the mind of the young Count. It is curious to note in how many respects they both acted on a common policy in after life. Both took part in advocating social progress without relinquishing religion. On returning to his country, each commenced to agitate for the separation of the Church

* "Imperial Dictionary of Biography."

from the State ; Mr. Stephens in England, Montalembert in France. Mr. Stephens took sides with Chartists and Factory Agitators, as Montalembert did with the Polish and Irish leaders, and both with the same object, that of proving that faith was the protector and friend of the social interests of the democracy, and that religion cared for the material welfare of the people.

In the year 1829, Joseph Rayner Stephens was received into full connexion at the Sheffield Conference, and duly ordained a Wesleyan minister.* In 1830 he was stationed at Cheltenham.†

In these years of his early absence from his father's house, he wrote letters home which manifested a fine spirit of dutifulness and affection. The following letter, written in the year 1830, was addressed to his father, then residing at Belmont Row, Birmingham. It had no post-mark upon the envelope, and was probably enclosed with others in a cover franked by a member of Parliament. It was, as most readers know, common in those days, when postal rates were high, for letters to bear the name of a member of Parliament written by himself in one corner, as they then went free.

"MY DEAR FATHER AND MOTHER,

"After spending Tuesday in Cheltenham, and visiting the principal friends there, I proceeded to

* "Minutes of Conference," p. 446.

† *Idem*, p. 565.

Bristol, where I enjoyed myself the remainder of the week in the society of a few, I think, well-chosen, and I am sure, most affectionate friends. On Saturday night I arrived at Winchcomb, after ascending and descending one of the most formidable hills a pedestrian would ever wish to encounter. I went in a sort of shandry-dan or country omnibus, the only accommodation conveyance between that place and Cheltenham 'till within a month or two ago, when the Leamington and Birmingham coach took it in their route. It is one of the rudest, homeliest places I ever saw; at least a century behind even a third-rate town that makes the least pretensions to modern improvements. By-the-by, my predecessor might well save a few pounds a year of his circuit allowance; he was comparatively little at home—not by invitation, but by what is called *dropping in* at a friend's house about their meal-time, and kindly consenting to join them. Now this is talked about, not as a thing the people liked, but disliked—and such visiting from house to house I am determined not to acquaint myself with. I know our people like to see their preacher sit down with them to a family meal *now and then* without any ceremony, but anything beyond this all sensible persons must and will detest.

“Beyond the duties of my office, discharged with proper dignity and conscientiousness, there is nothing to interest me in this place. There is not a soul

with whom I have to do that moves in any sphere of mind higher than the every-day business of life. This I am far from despising, and I shall make myself tolerably comfortable among them, and hope to be, as well as to appear, agreeable to all.

“ I only got into my lodgings last night, having been out this week in the Gloucester circuit, attending some country meetings. I would not write ’till I could send you word not merely how I was, but how I was likely to be.

“ The situation is very good : I have a most beautiful view of the hills, with the ruined castle, out of my study window. I have no doubt that, when settled and entered upon some course of study and employment, I shall love my solitude. For, *alone* I must be as long as I stay here ; no danger of a friend, much less one to be loved.

“ I preached in Cheltenham last Sunday—there is a very kind circle of friends, uniting the rare excellences of northern frankness and hospitality with southern politeness and refinement. But I intend to keep myself as much as possible at home, since I cannot avail myself of their society without grievous sacrifice of time.

“ Osborne, my superintendent, seems a very free and brotherly colleague, and as we cannot clash, even if so disposed, there is every prospect of harmony and peace betwixt us.

"I hope this will find my dear father and mother both well.

"Yours affectionately,

"JOSEPH R. STEPHENS."

The good sense and self-respect expressed in this letter are quite noteworthy in a young man of twenty-five. His judgment is as ripe as though he had had the experience of mature years. He "does not despise the every-day business of life," which has to be done by everyone, and in which each person should help; and if it be mean and poor, raise it by higher example and relieve it from insipidity by bright participation in it. At the same time, it is the mark of a mind wishful for improvement, and capable of it, that a young man should desire to associate in due season with those wiser than himself.

A year or two after, another letter is received by his father; this time franked by Mr. Hindley. He had become acquainted with that Member of Parliament, who later on took so conspicuous a part in the Factory agitation, with which Mr. Stephens was destined to become so largely connected. All through his life his heart was in fireside things as well as public affairs. The second letter, still dateless within and without, is as follows:—

"DEAR FATHER,

"I take advantage of one of Mr. Hindley's last franks to write a few lines from *my own* home to *my*

old home, to let you know of our welfare, for which you have always prayed, and which it will rejoice you to hear of.

My own health is good. I am able to go through my regular work with ease and pleasure, and I have the consolation to find that I do not labour in vain. The societies with which I am connected are peaceful and prosperous. There is mutual confidence and esteem betwixt us. I have never yet had reason to regret having settled here—but rather to be thankful. We often wish you were with us for a few months. It would be Elizabeth's* pride to minister to your little wants and make you comfortable. Are you afraid to encounter the journey? A few hours will bring you to our door, and see you home again, when you were wearied of your visit. Do try sometime in the summer, or at the next Leeds Conference.

The weather has set in with great severity. A heavy fall of snow yesterday has given a very wintry appearance to the *world without*, but *within* it is snug and cosy, and comfortable. You shall be

* Elizabeth is Mrs. Stephens. Mr. Stephens was twice married; first in 1835 to Miss Elizabeth Henwood, niece of James Henwood, Esq., by whom he had four daughters. Mrs. Stephen died at Hutton in Essex, January, 1852, leaving but one surviving daughter, Henrietta, who married Alfred Earle, Esq., in 1870. Mr. Stephens married a second time, in May, 1857, Susannah, daughter of Samuel Shaw, Esq., of the Rookhills, Derby, by whom he had three sons and three daughters of whom, two sons, Arthur Cornwall Stephens, born 1861, and George Alfred, born 1863, survive him.

well waited on, for, after all, philosopher as I know you to be, there *is* a difference which must be *felt*, though it may not be acknowledged.

“Aunt French’s death must have affected mother much. I read it in the paper with surprise and with sorrow. She was mother’s last sister. The breaking of these links must loosen our own hold on life, for to be left *alone*, after being one of a numerous *band*, cannot but forcibly admonish us that we *too* are but strangers and wanderers as *all* our fathers were. I shall be glad to hear from mother, to be assured of her prosperity, as I am assured of her peace.

“I have no *news*, indeed I never draft much in such matters. I saw many of your old friends in Newcastle. The factory system is at present enjoying a good deal of the time and attention of

Your affectionate son,

“JOSEPH R. STEPHENS.”

By this time the “son” had begun to take interest in public affairs. His attention had been drawn to the condition of factory operatives. Ministers of the Established Church were not friendly to the agitation on their behalf, which Mr. Stephens conceived was owing to the connection of that Church with the State. He regarded that union as the source of power to those whom he then considered practical enemies of the people—and he

shortly became the subject of a "case" at the hands of his Methodist brethren.

In 1834 he retired from formal connection with the Wesleyan Ministry. There was a well prepared report, drawn up by the authority of a district meeting, upon his "case"*—and of his having been temporarily suspended. Mr. Stephens appealed to the Conference, which in due course heard his defence, and appointed a Committee of Ministers to confer with him. The cause of this "suspension" was that he had openly agitated for the separation of the Church from the State: the condition the Conference thought it necessary to impose upon him was that he should desist from this. As he refused to pledge himself to abstain in the future from any such course, his resignation was finally accepted.

Before things came to this pass, many circumstances occurred in which not only the Wesleyan connection but the outside public took interest. His brother John, the Editor of the *Christian Advocate*, was a man of resolute religious convictions, and had published some strictures upon a well-known Wesleyan minister of that day, which came finally to be adjudicated upon in the law courts. The militant editor of the *Christian Advocate* could not be an unconcerned spectator of the proceedings about to be instituted against his brother, and he accordingly addressed to his brother Joseph the following joint

* "Minutes of Conference," vol. vii. p. 417.

letter, signed by himself and his friend (and probably editorial colleague) Mr. J. H. Hare :—

“ DEAR FRIEND,

“ As we expected, so it has turned out ; and you are to undergo the censures of your brethren for the prominent part which you have taken in the question of the separation of Church and State. We do not know what are the specific charges which are to be brought against you, and perhaps you yourself are not better informed. We presume, however, that, unless you have taken care to provide against objections on such a score, the accusation will be that you have neglected your appointments. Whatever may be alleged as the ostensible crime, we are quite sure that the real ground of this movement against you is your recent advocacy of the cause of religious liberty.

“ In your present circumstances we do not presume to advise you how to act, having no doubt that you will adopt a course worthy of yourself, and of the just cause in which, it seems, you are to be the first martyr.

“ Our principal reason for writing is to show you that we observe you with no common degree of interest ; as a proof of which we give you to understand that our best services, and the columns of the *Christian Advocate*, are at your command. We do

not know whether you may deem it advisable, or not, to say anything about your case before the district meeting. If you do, we will lend you our editorial "*we*" for the purpose. At all events we hope you will not fail to furnish us with ample details of the proceedings when they shall have been taken.

"You will have noticed that every opportunity is seized by Jabez* and his minions for making demonstrations in favour of the Church. Tommy Jackson has not let slip the opportunities afforded him in writing Watson's life, whom he has represented as more of a Churchman than he really was. Those who are sometimes admitted into the secrets of this party talk confidentially about Methodism being made an appendage to the Church.

"Accept the assurances of our sympathy and expressions of our deep sense of the obligation under which you have laid the friends of religious liberty by your able defence of that cause.

"Believe us to remain,

"With sincere affection and esteem,

"J. M. HARE,

"JOHN STEPHENS.

"4, Red Lion Court, Fleet Street.

"*April* 16th, 1834."

This is not an uninteresting letter, even at this lapse of time. After nearly half a century, a similar

* The Rev. Jabez Bunting.

“ party talk confidentially about Methodism being made an appendage to the Church.” Old Methodists will well understand the reference to “ Jabez and his minions,” who often gave trouble to their liberal colleagues in those days. From his brother and his father, who both had means of knowing the inner administrative mind and ways of Wesleyanism, Joseph Rayner had good knowledge of what was in store for him if he continued contumacious upon the question of Church and State.

It is from the pages of the *Christian Advocate* that the reader alone can learn the nature of the proceedings which were officially taken against the wilful young preacher. The article of indictment against Brother J. R. Stephens, and the resolutions come to thereon, are set forth as follows :—

“ 1.—That Brother J. R. Stephens has attended four public meetings held at Ashton-under-Lyne, Hyde, Oldham, and Staleybridge, one of the avowed objects of which meetings was to obtain the total separation of the Church and the State, and that at these meetings he delivered speeches expressive of his approbation of that object.

“ 2.—That at the Ashton meeting the terms ‘ Wesleyan Methodists of Ashton-under-Lyne’ were, on his motion, introduced into the preamble of a memorial complaining of certain practical grievances of Dissenters.

“3.—That he announced from the pulpit that a town’s petition, praying for the separation of the Church and the State, lay for signature in the vestry of the chapel.

“4.—That he has accepted an appointment to the office of ‘Corresponding Secretary’ to a society called ‘The Church Separation Society for Ashton-under-Lyne and the neighbouring district.’

“Resolutions.

“1.—That, in these proceedings, Brother Stephens has flagrantly violated the peaceable and anti-Sectarian spirit of Wesleyan Methodism, so strongly enjoined in the writings of our founder, enforced by repeated acts of the Conference since his decease, and required as a necessary qualification of every Methodist preacher, particularly in that epitome of his pastoral duties, contained in the minutes of 1820, and directed, by a standing order of the Conference, to be read in every annual district meeting, as solemnly binding on every minister of our connection.

“2.—That the above-mentioned speeches of Brother Stephens are directly at variance with the general sentiments of Mr. Wesley and the Conference, and are distinguished by a spirit highly unbecoming a Wesleyan minister, and inconsistent with those sentiments of respect and affection towards the Church of England which our connection has, from

the beginning, openly professed, and honourably maintained.

"3.—That, as far as his influence extends, Brother Stephens has committed the character of the Connection upon a question involving its public credit, as well as its internal tranquillity; and he has manifested a great want of deference to the recorded opinions of his fathers and brethren in the ministry, and a recklessness of consequence as to himself and others, by the very active and prominent part which he has taken in the aggressive proceedings adopted by the meetings before referred to.

"4.—That he has endangered the peace, and acted prejudicially to the spirituality of the connection, by giving occasion to the introduction amongst our people, of unprofitable disputations on ecclesiastical politics; thus violating the directions of the last Conference in its 'Pastoral Address' to the societies, which Brother Stephens, as well as every other Methodist preacher, was bound, by his example at least, to enforce. (See Minutes for 1833, p. 113.)

"5.—That Brother Stephens, in accepting the office of Corresponding Secretary to the Ashton Church Separation Society, has acted contrary to his peculiar calling and solemn engagements as a Methodist preacher.

"6.—That the culpability of these proceedings is aggravated by the fact that they were pursued by Brother Stephens without consultation with his

superintendent, and contrary to his example and expressed opinion.

“7.—That Brother Stephens be authoritatively required to resign his office as Secretary to the Church Separation Society, and to abstain, until next session of Conference, from taking any part in the proceedings of the society, or of any other society or meeting having a kindred object ; and that, in the event of a violation of this injunction, he be forthwith suspended until the Conference, and that his superintendent give immediate notice to the chairman of the district, that the President may supply his place in the Ashton circuit.

“The above resolutions having been read to Brother Stephens, he declared that on the finding of the 2nd and 3rd he could not acknowledge the authority of the meeting, and that he would not resign his office of Corresponding Secretary to the Church Separation Society of Ashton-under-Lyne.

“8.—He is, therefore, now suspended from the exercise of his ministry until the next Conference.

“9.—That Brother Stephens be required forthwith to remove from the Ashton-under-Lyne circuit, and that the chairman be requested to write to the President for a supply.”

The apprehension of his relative and friend, the editor of the *Christian Advocate*, that the charge against him would be disguised under an allegation

that he had "neglected his appointments," was not fulfilled. He had not neglected his duties. One so zealous as he, and so capable of work, might make self-imposed additions to his duties, but he would be sure to discharge every ministerial office. Thus his accusers were compelled to deal with the real question, his "advocacy of the cause of religious liberty" outside the Connection, and in the Dissenting world generally. Against this there was no Wesleyan law: only a constructive "general sentiment of Mr. Wesley and the Conference." Mr. Stephens' action was held to be contrary to the "public credit" of Wesleyanism. It is entirely to the honour of the "suspended" preacher that no imputation, direct or constructive, could be brought against him of failure in the proper discharge of his prescribed duties, or of non-adherence to any Christian doctrine he had undertaken to maintain.

The document we have quoted is, however, a very curious one, from the light it throws upon the Wesleyan mind and Connectional policy of that day. Every form of contempt the Church could express was poured upon the Wesleyans for their "sectarian" doctrine, vulgarity in piety, and personal ignorance. Yet these Wesleyan ministers make proclamation of their "anti-sectarian spirit," and their "sentiments of respect and affection towards the Church of England," which Church had ridiculed and despised them in every parish in which they gave out a hymn.

Wesleyanism, as these pages testify, produces men of generous impulse and high courage ; but the whole history of religious sects presents no example of such abjectness of spirit as official Wesleyanism displayed at that date towards the Church of England. However, since those days, the nobler sort of Wesleyans—like Mr. Stephens and his colleagues—have increased, and by their lives and teaching have shown that piety can be combined with self-respect.

Mr. Stephens, however, was not without the support and sympathy of many of his brethren in the ministry, though the more responsible or eminent preachers, would not, for reasons of denominational policy, accord him their approval. The adverse decision of the Conference was a subject of contention in many parts of the country, and in some districts the Wesleyans openly took Mr. Stephens' part. A meeting of trustees, local preachers, and private members of the Wesleyan Society, held in Birmingham, May 8, 1834, expressed their opinion, by unanimous resolution, that Mr. Stephens was suspended from his office, not from any neglect of duty or for any violation of law, but solely because on a matter totally unconnected with Methodist doctrine he claimed the right of every British subject to hold and express his unbiassed opinion ; whilst local preachers and leaders in the Methodist Society of Whitehaven, declared his suspension "partial, unjust, and oppressive." A public meeting of Dissenters at

Nottingham sent him resolutions of thanks for the noble stand he had made for religious liberty. From Sheffield and other places, invitations were sent to him to settle in the district of the writers, and offers of appointment and support were cordially made to him. Mr. Stephens never repined at his excommunication from the Wesleyan ministry, and never resented it ; neither did he desert his personal faith in religion, but went forth into the world casting his lot with the unfriended poor, whom he believed it to be the duty of a minister to succour and to guide.

Within a short time of his separation from the Wesleyan Connection he was publicly known as the trusted and honoured colleague of Oastler, Hindley, Saddler, and Fielden, in the agitation for "The Ten Hours' Bill." He still continued to preach and teach, but the interest he took in the physical improvement of the people was not looked upon with favour by the religious world. The following entry in his father's Diary at this time shows what was going on :—

"Sept. 15, 1836.—A letter from Joseph : lost five out of seven preaching-houses by the part he has taken in the Factory Question. Had he served the God of Israel instead of the calves of Jeroboam, he would not have been so soon forsaken. He kindly offers to contribute anything I please to assist his dear sister

Sharon. He is an honourable and a generous young man."

A year later Mr. Stephens sought to give more effect to his advocacy of the factory operatives by going into Parliament. He offered himself as a candidate to represent the borough of Ashton-under-Lyne.

His father's Diary at this time contains the following entry :—

"July 6, 1837.—My son Joseph going to put up for a Member of Parliament. I think he must be daft."

"July 27.—This day my son J. is a candidate for Ashton-under-Lyne. I can hardly wish him success."

Other evidence will occur of the consistent candour of his father. Whether he wrote in his diary in private, or in a letter to others, on any question in which his own convictions were concerned, he never withheld the truth, however strong was the inducement from the great love he bore his son.

It ought to be mentioned before concluding this chapter, that among the letters which Joseph Stephens received at the time when his case was under the consideration of the Wesleyan Conference were two from the Rev. Robert Newton, written with boldness of hand, and that manly and kindly frankness always characteristic of this great preacher. The letters betray his regard for Mr. Stephens' father, who had lately held the high position of President among

them, and his anxiety as to the career of his son, whose ability and promise he discerned. The purport of the letters was to inform Mr. Stephens that his brethren would have no choice but to take measures against him, unless he found himself able, and was willing, to observe the discipline the Conference felt itself obliged to exact from its ministers.

CHAPTER IV.

BECOMES A POLITICAL ADVOCATE.

WHAT Wesleyanism prided itself in, and alone cared for in the days of which we write, was, as the reader has seen, "Spirituality"—not Humanity, not Liberty. What our suspended preacher cared for very strongly was Humanity, and only for freedom such as was necessary to prevent inhumanity, to put down injustice, and to keep it down. The two things which moved Mr. Stephens to sympathy and indignation were the treatment of the poor under the then new Poor Law, and the condition of children in our factories. For them he became Agitator, Advocate, Orator,—on what inspiration and for what reasons, shall appear in his own words, as our brief story proceeds.

People now are prone to look upon the stormy and infuriate opposition to the Poor Law—regarded as the baleful fruit of the Reform Bill—as based on mere ignorance. Those who think so are too ignorant to understand the terrors of those times. It was not ignorance—it was justifiable indignation with which the Poor Law scheme was regarded. Now that Free Trade has brought steadier employment and higher

wages to the working class; now that the Repeal of the Corn Laws has made food abundant among the common people; now that the working class are more powerful, politically, than they were forty years ago, the workhouse has not the same terror, being more associated with the accidentally unfortunate, the infirm, and the idle. The mass of the people do not expect to go there, and do not intend to go there. But through the first forty years of this century, almost every workman and every labourer expected to go there sooner or later. Thus the hatred of the Poor Law was well founded. Its dreary punishment would fall, it was believed, not upon the idle merely, but upon the working people, who by no thrift could save, nor by any industry provide for the future, when disease and age should overtake them. He has no heart who does not sympathize with the hatred of the Poor Law, as the poor then understood it. He has no generous discrimination who is wanting in respect for the memory of Joseph Rayner Stephens, who—having no reason to fear the Poor Law himself—bravely took the part of the humble, honest, but helpless poor, who had.

The Poor Law of Queen Elizabeth's time was a wild, incoherent sort of communism. When the property of the Church was seized by the Crown, the pensioners of the Church became paupers. The landowners, not intending to maintain the poor, hanged them very freely. When the landowners had reduced

the number of paupers by the gallows, they transferred their support to the citizens, who, being unable to keep the poor, and unwilling to kill them, and no one coming forward to give them the necessary knowledge whereby the poor could keep themselves—the workhouse was turned into a penal settlement of indigent industry. It is not possible to render the poorhouse easy of access and pleasant in its arrangements, without its becoming crowded by entire families willing to live at other people's expense. If only the helpless and the honest poor were found there, it would not be made a place of punishment ; but since the idle and dishonest are ready to impose themselves upon public charity, the poorhouse has to be made disagreeable on principle. While rulers think it necessary for their own security to refuse vote or knowledge, or other condition of industrial welfare, by means of which the honest poor can really live by toil, they have no right to drive the industrious into the workhouse, and then subject them to criminal treatment when they are there. It was the hopelessness of honest workmen escaping this lot that awoke savage and relentless hatred of the penal inflictions introduced into the workhouse by the new Poor Law Act. They made the name of Political Economy—a science of sense and mercy—detestable in the minds of the people, and everybody who aided and expounded it was alike condemned. Selfish guardians, brutal masters, negligent doctors, all who

killed the paupers speedily by insolence, privation, or indignity, and buried them cheaply, the new Poor Law elevated into economists in the ratepayers' interest.

Mr. Shiel understood this, and put it very clearly when advising his Irish constituents to resist the introduction of the Poor Law among them. He said to the shopkeepers and farmers, "There are myriads of paupers whose wretchedness will be cast upon you, and for whom, when you cannot supply work, you will be compelled to furnish food."* Thus the poor had a bad time of it. To all householders they were objects of dread and dislike. Public pestilence, so long as it was discriminating and confined its ravages to the poor, was viewed as no great evil. The activity of the undertaker assisted in the reduction of the poor rates.

It was not from anger or mere sentiment that the people regarded the poorhouse as a prison. Historians, not at all of the revolutionary school, take a similar view of the facts. This is what one of them, Mr. Spencer Walpole, has recorded :—

"During the first few years which succeeded Waterloo, Englishmen enjoyed less real liberty than at any time since the Revolution of 1688. The pauper was treated as a criminal, and the administration of the Poor Law made almost every labourer a pauper."†

* Mr. Lalor Shiel at Tipperary, Sept. 1837.

† Spencer Walpole, "History of England."

To avoid these accursed asylums of poverty, commonly called poorhouses—honest working-men in those days lived with fewer comforts out of the house than would have been accorded them in it, and sent their children into the factories to augment the insufficient income of the home. This generation knows nothing of what were really the horrors of factory life to little children then. A minister of religion who took their part was indeed a minister of mercy.

So far back as the reign of King Alfred—the first authenticated period when Englishmen were supposed to do any regular work—that excellent monarch is said to have divided the day into eight hours for sleep, eight hours for work, and eight hours for recreation—an arrangement which has been thought satisfactory ever since, but very rarely acted upon. King Alfred was always popular in the days of the factory agitation, when it was thought a great thing to get back working-hours to the limit of 'ten hours' labour. Mr. Fielden said the King Alfred arrangement was always very popular with his father, and he should like to see it prevail. After King Alfred, nothing appears to have been meditated for the benefit of the working people—except hanging them, if they were found to be in a mendicant state—until the Board of Trade, in William III.'s time, was directed to inquire into the condition of children. Lord Hales and John Locke (he who wrote on the

“Human Understanding”) were the commissioners to whom the matter was entrusted. Locke, being a philosopher, took a rational view of the subject and advised the formation of schools for the education of children, but they were much wiser schools than Mr. Forster was able to recommend two hundred years later. Locke and Lord Hales advised that industrial schools should be provided in every parish—there were to be parochial workshops for children on a better plan than the State workshops proposed afterwards by Louis Blanc. The children were to be taught and instructed in the art of maintaining themselves. They were to be protected from idleness, ignorance, and excessive work. It was a merciful scheme for preserving the health, both of mind and body, of little people. If this scheme had been carried out, the working classes of England would have been the happiest, the wisest, the most self-supporting, and the healthiest population in the world.

Such was the state of things at the end of the last century and the beginning of this, that irons were riveted upon hungry, ignorant apprentices, to keep them in subjection. The case was mentioned, in the Factory agitation, of one Robert Blincoe, a Scottish apprentice, who observed that the pigs of his master were fed with warm meal puddings, whilst he, worse fed, used to go into the sty and steal them—so hungry was he. The clever pigs, finding their food decrease, squealed and attacked the poor

apprentice, who was discovered one day fighting with the pigs for their puddings. He was punished for his larceny in the sty, and the pigs alone had a full meal. In those days children were often destroyed in the mills by privation, punishment, and excessive hours of working ; and some committed suicide.

Many millowners in the agitation days boasted that they made large sums annually by fines. Some of them kept two clocks, by which they proved that little children were late, who were hurrying through the dark lanes in pattens, at half-past five in the morning—often without breakfast. Their miserable parents were publicly admonished to give them food if they had it, before sending them out, half asleep, into the cold streets. Mr. Sadler produced in the House of Commons black, heavy, leathern thongs, employed by mill overseers to beat children with, to keep them from falling down asleep. Girls were so beaten over the arms, face and bosom.* The generous eloquence of men like Stephens, Oastler, Sadler, Fielden and others, ultimately enlisted the sympathy of men in the highest ranks of society ; but it was a long time before the cry of the poor children reached them. To his honour, His Royal Highness the Duke of Sussex himself convened a meeting at the London Tavern, February 23, 1833, of the friends of our little factory workers.

* "Life of Michael Thomas Sadler," pp. 374-5.

Mr. Oastler, at the Duke's meeting, said, "He had seen children with back and breast black; and on a child living within a mile of his house, he had counted thirty-three cuts on its back—(sensation). His lip was cut and his eyelid was cut—(sensation). What crime had this child committed? He had worked so long that he had fallen asleep over his work. The Rev. G. R. Bull once sent me a lock of hair with a part of the scalp attached to it. He said it had been torn from the head of a poor factory girl in his neighbourhood. She was asleep, as many of them used to be, and the angry overlooker had seized her by the hair and had swung the child round in the air, and dashed her on the floor, and in doing so had torn the hair and part of the scalp from off her head—(great sensation)." Facts were related at the public meetings then held which seem incredible now, but were not, and could not be, contradicted then. Little half-fed, ungrown things were kept at work twelve, fourteen, and eighteen hours without meal-times; they ate what they had to eat as they worked. Children slept as they stood. Overseers kept tanks of cold water at hand in which they dipped the lads to awaken them, who had to work afterwards all day in their wet clothes. Sometimes, when the poor children went to work they had their fingers taken off by the machine through drowsy inattention. Some, when they were careless, were put to torture by being made to stand upon a tub, holding

a weight, with one leg up, and were flogged if the weight descended. The legs of girls were commonly swollen with long-standing, and as often as any of them perished by this treatment others took the place of the dead. Every Wesleyan preacher in the North of England knew of these things in every district in which he was stationed. What a field to cultivate "spirituality" in ! Mr. Oastler said, "He remembered a poor widow who used to worship at the same church as himself, whose children should have gone to the Sunday School, but they could not; they were too weary from their excessive work. Many a time had he seen this poor woman dressing her children's ancles when they came from work, and then setting them on the bed to feed them. She would give to each child in turn a mouthful of bread and milk, but when she came with a second spoonful to the eldest, she would find it asleep, with the food unmasticated in its mouth."

Sadler had a taste for poetry as well as for the drier study of political economy and the statistics of Malthus. In early life he wrote verses. The following lines are from his pen. They were written to illustrate the great cause he was then advocating in Parliament. The verses were founded on evidence given before a Parliamentary Committee of which Mr. Sadler was Chairman. They have oft been reprinted without being ascribed to their real author. They are published in Mr. Sadler's Memoirs.

As completely as any speech which could be quoted, they show the indignant feelings which then moved the hearts of men :—

THE FACTORY GIRL'S LAST DAY.

'Twas on a winter's morning,
The weather wet and wild,
Three hours before the dawning
The father roused his child ;
Her daily morsel bringing,
The darksome room he paced,
And cried, "The bell is ringing,
My hapless darling, haste !"

"Father, I'm up, but weary,
I scarce can reach the door,
And long the way and dreary---
Oh, carry me once more !
To help us we've no mother ;
And you have no employ ;
They killed my little brother—
Like him I'll work and die !"

Her wasted form seemed nothing—
The load was at his heart ;
The sufferer he kept soothing
Till at the mill they part.
The overlooker met her,
As to her frame she crept,
And with his thong he beat her,
And cursed her as she wept.

Alas ! what hours of horror
Made up her latest day ;
In toil, and pain, and sorrow
They slowly passed away :
It seemed, as she grew weaker,
The threads the oftener broke ;
The rapid wheels ran quicker,
And heavier fell the stroke.

The sun had long descended,
But night brought no repose ;
Her day began and ended
As cruel tyrants chose.
At length a little neighbour
Her halfpenny she paid,
To take her last hour's labour,
While by her frame she laid.

At last, the engine ceasing,
The captives homeward rushed ;
She thought her strength increasing—
'Twas hope her spirits flushed.
She left, but oft she tarried ;
She fell and rose no more,
Till, by her comrades carried,
She reached her father's door.

All night, with tortured feeling,
He watched his speechless child ;
While, close beside her kneeling,
She knew him not, nor smiled.
Again the factory's ringing
Her last perceptions tried ;
When, from her strawbed springing,
“ 'Tis time ! ” she shrieked, and died !

That night a chariot passed her,
While on the ground she lay ;
The daughters of her master
An evening visit pay ;
Their tender hearts were sighing
As negro wrongs were told,
While the white slaves lay dying
Who gained their father's gold !

The witness who gave the facts upon which these verses were written was one Gillett Sharpe, who told the dramatic story in a simple natural way.

It appeared to be quite unexpectedly elicited from him ; he had no idea what impression it was destined to make, and how long it would live in the literature of labour. Though Mr. Sadler had small command of the language of real life, he has preserved the pathos of the facts.

Mr. Billington, of Blackburn, in a speech at Padiham, March 2, 1872, recalls the social and industrial facts which poets then and at earlier periods had noted. "The over-straining of the physical energies in the mill crushed-out men's mentality," and he quoted the words of Alexander Smith as indicative of that condition :—

In the street, the tide of being
How it surges, how it rolls !
God, what base, ignoble faces !
God, what bodies wanting souls !

The words of Henry Kirke White were no picture of the imagination but a veritable reality :—

The pale mechanic leaves the labouring loom,
The air-pent hole, the pestilential room ;
And rushes out, impatient to begin
His stated course of customary sin.

Mr. Billington continued : "They wanted more rest and more tranquillity, and then they would have the foundation for a higher intellectuality, a better morality, and a greater humanity"—(cheers).

Our hope is in our effort,
Luck lies our will within ;
Perchance and choice are brothers,
And faith and fate akin.

Then courage up, and colours up,
Whatever may assail ;
God helpeth those who help themselves—
Press forward and prevail.

Mr. Sadler was the first man who introduced into Parliament a Factory Bill in the interest of the workers. In none of the histories of the Factory Movement is any chronological table given setting forth the men and material epochs of the agitation : who commenced it in an effectual way, who became its prominent champions, who aided them ; what public meetings, what events influenced its career, what was the original demand, what modifications were made in that, what accretion it acquired ; what were the compromises which diverted the movement, and who proposed them ; what were the final terms of the demand conceded, and what have been the subsequent securities obtained ? No history would be more interesting to modern politicians than one, in the compass of a small book, that related, on these lines, the political vicissitudes of this movement which took thirty-three years to accomplish its merciful object. The arguments which political economy could advance against it were stronger than those which mere humanity had to advance in its favours. Of the eminent men opposed to the movement, there were Mr. Bright and Mr. Cobden, who were not less men of humanity, and were making splendid sacrifices in another way in the interests of the common people.

All the accounts of the Factory Movement extant are either statistical or passionate and partizan, and political facts that would be instructive for all time appear never to have attracted even the passing attention of the writers.

None have distinguished and estimated the actual measure of merit due to each leader in the Factory Agitation. To Mr. Sadler succeeded Lord Ashley (now Earl of Shaftesbury); then came Charles Hindley; to him succeeded John Fielden. It was Mr. Wood who induced Mr. Oastler to enter the movement, who made so great a name in it that Sadler sought Oastler to aid him, because he found him to be a man of eloquence, with a good voice, a good presence, a capacity for correct speaking, beside being wholly in earnest. Stephens, who joined Oastler, excelled all of them in various knowledge, without which no oratory can be of permanent value. He had a finer imagination, a persistency which nothing could turn aside, and what, was not less important, more enduring physical strength than any of his co-adjutors, who all either died early, or were enfeebled prematurely by their work. Lord John Russell, when he had to give political attention to the subject, spoke in favour of an Eleven Hours Bill. To evade Sadler's Ten Hours Bill, the Halifax masters offered eleven hours and reduced wages. Mr. Edward Baines started a compromise when the inevitable day of legislation came; but Sadler, who had started the Ten Hours

claim, imitated Brougham's "Unconditional Emancipation" with respect to slavery, and he and Oastler and Stephens sent round the country the cry of "Ten Hours and No Surrender." When the Bill was finally carried, Mr. Bright did not vote in the last division against it; Dr. Bowring did. Sir Wm. Molesworth, Lord Brougham, Miss Martineau, Sir John Trelawny, Mr. Wakley, Mr. Milner Gibson, J. A. Roebuck, Mr. Cobden, and Mr. Hume were, on grounds of political economy, opposed to the Bill. It was a singular misfortune of political opinion which placed the greatest living advocates for freedom and progress, on what was considered the side of inhumanity. The great Whigs and philosophical Radicals, some of whose names are cited here, believed that it was better for the working people that their labours should run in the channel of freedom, instead of being regulated by Act of Parliament. It is an incredible humiliation and confession of incapacity, that parents in England should be without the self-respect, or courage, or means to withdraw their children from any factory labour which they find to be injurious to them. The aim of the Liberals was to compel the people to acquire habits of self-help, and the management of their own affairs: therefore they opposed the Ten Hours Bill, which taught them dependence on Acts of Parliament for the regulation of their labour, and practically the limitation of their income. The advocates of the Factory Act were

mostly of another school in politics, which preferred the dependence of the people, and whose principle and object were to control them—control them, be it in justice said, by kindness and social concession. Most of these friends of the Factory Act, like Mr. Stephens and Mr. Oastler, honestly meant to control the people for their own good. Others had baser views, and sought to control them for ends of interest, ambition, and power. But the noble and the base alike fortunately united to abate industrial misery which demanded to be abated at once, and which could not wait for the dilatory redress of general progress inspired by political economy. When the agitation was over, it was seen who were the enduring friends of the political and industrial liberty of the people. Lord Russell, Harriet Martineau, Mr. Bright, Mr. Cobden, Sir John Trelawny, and other eminent members of the party known as Philosophical Radicals, continued the advocates of every measure likely to place freedom and competence in the independent hands of the people. In this field, the leading Conservative advocates of Factory and Poor Law humanity were seen no more.

CHAPTER V.

HIS COLLEAGUES AND CORRESPONDENTS.

IN another chapter, which treats of the fury of the conflict for the abatement of the factory horrors, which so moved the sympathy of many public men, the reader will see the strange combatants among whom Mr. Stephens was thrown. This chapter relates personal particulars of those famous leaders of the movement who were Mr. Stephens' immediate colleagues.

The following account of Mr. Oastler and Mr. Stephens is from the pen of Francis Place. It occurs in the remarkable records of his, preserved in the British Museum. Place was the daily companion of Jeremy Bentham ; he was the political adviser of all the insurgent leaders of the working class in his time, and was confidentially consulted by eminent members of the Government. Francis Place had the power of seeing men exactly as they were ; and he could estimate accurately their capacity and the nature and quality of their influence. Many times he described to the present writer exactly the characters of the leading men of the movements of

his time, which after experience of them confirmed. The following passage concerning Mr. Oastler and Mr. Stephens brings before our minds the transactions of that day as vividly as though we were living in the midst of them :—

“ The Factory *question*, as it was called, was at its height. At the head of it was a man of great animal powers, active, persevering, a ready writer and fluent speaker, of undoubted courage, and entertaining the very best intentions to serve the factory workers, and especially the unfortunate and helpless children employed in the mills. Withal, he was somewhat wary, and greatly deficient in judgment. Never still, writing and speaking incessantly, making abundance of friends amongst the poor, and a like abundance of enemies among those who employed them, he thus put formidable impediments in his own way. More discretion than he possessed would have caused many influential men to assist him in his laudable endeavours to ameliorate the condition of a large mass of young persons whose condition was deplorable, and needed the good services of others. The vehemence of Richard Oastler, his imputations of bad intentions to almost every one who did not concur in his notions, his attacks on persons who attended public meetings respecting the condition of the ‘*factory children*,’ drove those persons away, and induced them to promote whatever had a tendency to counteract his proceedings. Mr. Oastler had the care of a con-

siderable estate ; his business was such as to give him much leisure, which he employed with indefatigable industry and considerable expense in the various ways which he, from time to time, thought likely to promote the accomplishment of the purposes to which his life was devoted.

“Mr. Oastler called himself a Tory, but was received by the wildest of the Democrats as a friend in common, and his influence over the working people was very considerable.

“There was another not less extraordinary man—a fanatic, possessing great command of language and great power of declamation—the Reverend J. R. Stephens, and he made common cause with O'Connor and Oastler.

“He was utterly careless of other men's opinions, and paid little or no regard to the feelings of any but those he wished to command ; and these were the working people. Over these he domineered, carrying everything he wished with a high hand ; he was obeyed, almost adored, by multitudes.

“He also professed himself a Tory, but acted the part of a Democrat ; denounced both Whigs and Tories, and everything, indeed, which appeared to him to stand in his way. Of personal consequences he was wholly reckless.

“The three, O'Connor, Oastler, and Stephens, played into each other's hands, and had an almost inconceivable command over the people.*

* F. Place, “Working Men's Associations,” vol. ii., p. 150, 27-820.

“By rendering combination illegal, complaints are stifled ; but the object of good government is not to stifle complaints, but to redress grievances. By redressing grievances, combinations become unnecessary.”*

This was the principle on which Mr. Stephens proceeded. He was in favour of order, and in favour of justice, and he believed only in the order which justice would produce. To his just and generous mind grievances of the poor were intolerable, and he was for redressing them ; and if not redressed by the humanity of those in authority, then he was for redressing them by combination, by public agitation, and by whatever agencies he believed to be justifiable in the sight of God.

It is pleasant to record the generous influence which Methodism exercised over the fortunes of this great movement for the humane improvement of the condition of the common people. There was more heart in Wesleyanism than in the Church. It was more generous even in its tenets of salvation—it regarded all who loved God as of the elect. This generosity in divinity extended itself into their daily life, and endowed eminent Wesleyans with practical sympathy for the unfortunate. The most distinguished of the friends of the factory workers were Wesleyans. After these Methodists had made the movement into a great cause, some of the nobler sort of Church-

* Charles Wing, “Evils of the Factory System.”

men came into it—as the Rev. G. S. Bull and the Earl of Shaftesbury, both members of the Established Church ; but they would never have originated the movement themselves.

Mr. Stephens, as we have seen, came of an eminent Wesleyan family ; Sadler, who rendered such splendid service to the cause, was a Wesleyan ; so was Richard Oastler.

Richard Oastler's father's house was always the home of John Wesley whenever he came to Thirsk. Richard Oastler's father's name was Robert, and he was considered to be the person who originated the practice of interring the Wesleyan dead in Methodist ground. He had a son who was killed in Marshall's factory, Leeds, and he wished him to be buried in the ground attached to the old chapel in Leeds. At that period no burial-places were attached to Methodist chapels or preaching-houses. However, no Methodist preacher would perform the service, it being an innovation on their established forms. Though the innovation was one which added to their dignity and equality as a body, they had the usual prejudice of ignorant Englishmen in favour of their own inferiority. Robert Oastler was a man of a different spirit. He persisted in his determination, and a Baptist minister officiated at his son's grave. Thus began the practice, which in due course became general, of the Methodists performing burial as well as other Church rites.

Richard Oastler was reared amid the manliest members of his sect; and mother, father, home, school, his brethren, and his God were the chief, as they remained the holiest, influences of his life.

Michael Thomas Sadler was born at Snelson, Derbyshire, in 1780. His mother was the daughter of a beneficed clergyman. Some years after her marriage, the Wesleyans made propagandist incursions into Doveridge, the adjoining parish to Snelson. Though strongly attached to the Established Church, she was soon interested in the earnestness and spiritual fervour of the Wesleyan preachers, and had the courage to become a frequent hearer of them, although the treatment of the Methodists in Doveridge resembled that which they met with in most other places. The vicar disliked them for their faithful condemnation of sin; the formalists resented their rigid requirement of a heart-service, and the clergyman of the parish joined the profligates in denouncing the Methodists from the pulpit as intruders in the parish—not that the clergyman was a partisan of profligacy, but he was unwilling that any one save himself should undertake its correction, or offer assistance in curing it. One day as young Sadler was going to school—his road lay over a bridge which spanned the Dove—he was met by a drunkard and loose-liver in the village, who nevertheless thinking himself qualified to assist the clergyman in reproving the Wesleyans, took up young Sadler

and holding him over the deep part of the water, threatened to throw him in unless he "cursed the Methodists." The profligate brute was aware that the boy's mother favoured them. "I never will curse them," said the brave lad; "you may kill me if you choose, but I never will." Mr. Sadler's first publication was written in his eighteenth year, and it was a defence of the Methodists against a public attack by the vicar from the pulpit; so that he was not only of them—he was their defender. He was a man of high integrity. He contested Huddersfield, and greatly desired to represent it. It is recorded that by saying privately in the afternoon the contrary of what he had said publicly in the morning, he could have secured his seat for the borough,* but he would not do it.

Brief quotations from a few letters yet extant addressed to Mr. Stephens will serve to show the regard in which he was held, and the influential position he occupied. He must have had a remarkable correspondence with men in high quarters. Mr. Oastler was personally intimate with the Duke of Wellington, and was constantly corresponding with him. He, and her Majesty also, were informed of Mr. Stephens' proceedings and sayings, as they took great interest in the cause of our factory children.

A passage occurs in Mr. Stephens's handwriting which indicates personal knowledge of proceedings

* "*Hist. Fact. Movement*," by Alfred, p. 131.

at Court ; he wrote :—"When the Factory Act was passed, the Queen, having signed it, said, 'she was a woman, a wife, a mother, and therefore both knew and felt for the sufferings of children.' Her heart was touched by recitals made to her. The workers struck a medal in commemoration of the Act being passed. And yet this measure took nearly half a century to steer across the stormy sea of ignorance, indifference and selfishness.

"Why thus refer to it? Because the Queen's heart is still stirred by the same emotions. She has invoked the attention of Parliament to the condition of the women and children who are employed in other trades. The Factory Acts are to serve as a rule for more general application."

Mr. Stephens's correspondence, were it in any sense complete, would be of great interest now to read ; but it seemed not to have occurred to him that people would care about him after he was dead, or that another generation might feel curious concerning his friends, and grateful for his own services. Neither did it occur to the present writer or to the family of the deceased, that there would be the public desire to erect a monument to his memory, which has been manifested by working men and women who are grateful for what Mr. Stephens did for their children. What their parents' feeling upon this subject once was, is described by Mr. Oastler in a speech at the Free Trade Hall, Manchester.

"There has been," he said, "the yearning of mothers and the enthusiasm of youth. One woman, with a baby in her arms, walked seventy-five miles to attend the great county meeting at York on the Ten Hours Bill, in order that her child, if it grew up, might have the honour of saying that he had been present at that meeting; and a boy walked forty-three miles to hold up his hand for a weakly brother who was prevented from going to that meeting."*

It is now too late to inquire what became of all the correspondence with Mr. Stephens, between 1835 and 1850. It is clear that he had powerful friends: when his imprisonment came, he was not sent to the place to which he was sentenced, but to Chester Castle, where he had attentions and conveniences valuable at that time.

Mr. Oastler was an emphatic man, and wrote, spoke, and thought in capitals. His ideas, like his letters, were all underlined. His letters to Mr. Stephens are very numerous, and full of confidence and regard.

In 1830, Mr. Oastler wrote from Rhyl, near St. Asaph, North Wales, earnestly entreating Mr. Stephens' counsel and advice, saying:—"I want your opinion as to whether I ought to retire. Remember, I am not *weary*—I am not *disgusted*. I am as fond as ever of striving to work for the poor, but now *I have no means*."

* "Report," July 12, 1849.

In May of the same year he wrote again to Mr. Stephens, who was then at Duckenfield, telling him of his health, and asking Mr. Stephens' correction of his Memoir, and counsel as to his public writings.

“Fixby Hall, May 4th, 1838.

“MY DEAR STEPHENS,

“I have been ill these ten days—quite laid by—bed—bed—bed—till I am sick of it. I have not yet got out of doors. A bad cough is my worst complaint. But still I fancy I shall rally.

“And in the midst of all I am so busy. How often I think of you—I cannot say how much. Will you correct my ‘Memoir,’ punctuation and all, and the bit of poetry at the end? I know you will. One word should be said somewhere—‘such is the man whom the Whigs abuse, defame, and actually hired assassins to destroy at the Morpeth riot, Wakefield, July 31, 1836.’ There should be a word about that, and then I think it will be complete. A clergyman, a high Tory—a dear old friend of mine, J. D. Schomberg—writes: ‘I cannot tell you how delighted I have been with the “Memoir.” Who could have written it? It is clear—it is true to the life. I should think it an honour to know that person.’ Huddersfield has its Factory meeting to-morrow night—I cannot be there. Do write me, my dear fellow, and tell me if this Conservative speech of mine will do. Spring is now coming: I shall rejoice to see you and yours. But

let me get a bit better ; this a few days will do, I hope. My head is all in a swim, so I must stop.

"Kindly, Stephens, with love, and Mary's love to all,

"Believe me, Stephens,

"Right lovingly yours,

"RICHARD OASTLER.

"I have a long letter for the *Northern Star* this week. Tell me, will it do ?—R.O."

The next letter contains some personal and political facts of interest:—

"MY DEAREST FELLOW,

"Thank you for the *Times* : very good indeed ; much better than I expected. Have you seen the *Sun* ? Oh, it is a glorious *Sun* ! Well ! they must lock me up *now*, else they never will.

"The Fixby demonstration has struck cold terror to the hearts of my foes—I never saw anything like it. The boys are in ecstasies, as to the Stocks and the £400. It will not do. If the banker refuses, never mind. Let him do his worst. My difficulty *was*, at *that* peculiar *moment*, to run the risk of being *refused*.

"Don't you see ? Yes ; I am sure you do.

"O'Connor promised me that, until the *Star* was clear and independent, he would not meddle with a daily paper.

"I know nothing about the 'delegates,' &c. Who and what is Lord Teynham?"

"Ta, ta, Stephens,

"RICHARD OASTLER.

"Huddersfield, Aug. 30th, 1838.

"About the meeting in Palace Yard—can any good be done? Remember me kindly to papa and mamma. Tell O'Brien to put the *Poor Man's Guardian's* soul into the *Star*.—R. O.

"To the Rev. J. R. STEPHENS,

"Old Dog Tavern, Holywell Street, London."

Another letter is one of sympathy for Mr. Stephens on the loss of his father. The enemies of the "Old King" had trepanned him into the Fleet Prison.

"The Fleet, Feb. 9th, 1841.

"MY DEAR STEPHENS,

"My heart grieves over your father's death! I had not heard one word! Peace, everlasting peace, to his soul!!

"Saving your *doubts*, you will be *heartily* welcome.

"I breakfast at half-past nine, and shall lay out a cup for you.

"Yours truly,

"RICHARD OASTLER."

The following letter was sent by Mr. Stephens to Squire Anty, and it shows Mr. Oastler's state of

mind and fine spirit when he believed death was approaching him. Mr. Oastler was called "the King of the Factory Children," and at last he was commonly spoken of as "the Old King" by his affectionate friends. He had kindly ways with him, and the friendship known to be entertained for him at Court helped to commend the fitness of the term :—

"Fulham, Middlesex, June 27th, 1848.

"MY DEAR ANTY,

"Thank you for your kind attention, and for the intelligence.

"Don't be angry because I am poor—I counted the cost before I entered the lists—I saw the workhouse before me. And now that we have gotten the Ten Hours Bill I must leave others to obtain the repeal of the accursed new Poor Law, preparing myself for its benumbing retreat !

"So it ever has been with those who resolve to maintain truth. But don't be angry—don't repine.

"I do not know that I was ever more happy.

"My health is broken, but my peace is confirmed.

"Kind remembrance to your wife and family, and

"Believe me to be, my dear Anty,

"Yours most truly,

"RICHARD OASTLER.

"Don't fancy that steel and lead can cure the internal disease !—R. O."

A letter dated November 26, 1849, from Richard Oastler to the Rev. Joseph Rayner Stephens, contains the following story of:—

The Idiot of Edenbridge.

“Methinks that wise men will weep and blush ere I have finished. *Richard P*——, that is the hero’s name—possessed a treasure that absorbed much of his care—that treasure was a bird—a jay : it died. *Richard* wept over it—and then buried it. He was a regular visitor at its grave : he ceased not to grieve with time. A friend, to comfort him, removed the body of the dead jay and placed in the same basket a living bird of the same species, covering it very lightly so as to leave air-room. He advised the idiot to open the grave and see if his favourite was not alive again. Poor *Richard* did so, and, to his inexpressible delight, found, as he thought, his old friend ‘come back.’ He took the stranger home—never discovered the harmless, the friendly trick, and was satisfied.

“At length, more than a year ago, his father died ! Did that idiot *love* his father ? His deeds shall answer.

“From the day that his father’s corpse was buried until now, *Richard* has been a daily visitor at his father’s grave. He selects the time of the funeral—and, I am assured, spends every day an hour there.

“Where his feet press, where he rests his staff,

where he places his father's snuff-box, bear token of his constancy there ; the grave itself has no other token of its occupier, save that which Nature gives—a grassy mound.

“I visited Edenbridge churchyard last Friday, about the hour I was told he would be there—three o'clock.

“It was a lovely afternoon. A few sheep were pasturing on the sacred ground. Its mounds and gravestones imparted a solemn mood, as such sights always do. Two village boys were sauntering among the tombs of their ancestors, unconscions that a stranger's eye beheld them. I did not see the object that I sought for.

“‘Is there not a grave here that is visited by an idiot?’ I asked the lads. ‘Yes, sir ; he's there now,’ replied one of the youths, pointing northerly. I followed his direction, and found the idiot at the grave of his father.

“At first, I feared to advance lest I should disturb the mourner. In a field adjoining oxen were grazing, and, though in November, spring seemed to smile. It was winter only *in the soul of the idiot*.

“That real mourner stood at the head of the grave where his father's body lay, leaning with his right shoulder upon his staff, his shovelled hat and handkerchief covering his face, moving his body from side to side as in agony. I knew that he was speaking : I also heard his sobs and sighs ! I did not then hear him articulate one word.

"At length he stood erect, and, grasping his staff with his right hand, looked at me. He did not look in anger—it was an idiot's expressive gaze of sorrow.

"Observing that my presence did not annoy him, I drew nearer: he looked again, but took no further note of me. Proceeding with his daily ritual, with his left hand he lifted up his *smock*, produced a snuff-box (his father was a snuff-taker, and *Richard* believes he still takes a pinch or two from his own box). Taking scrupulous care not to disturb a single blade of grass, the idiot placed the box upon the grave. He then resumed his former attitude, uttering in an agony of grief, sometimes choked with sobs, the hot tears dropping on his father's grave:—

"'Let him come back!' 'To the God Almighty.'

"These were his only oft-repeated words, uttered not as in prayer, but as though he were dictating a message to be sent to him who kept his father there.

"Again he was weary with his repeated ejaculations, and stood erect, clenching his staff, in silence, gazing on his father's grave.

"With the same care as before observed, he removed the snuff-box, placing it, with evident satisfaction, in his pocket. He adjusted his smock and his staff, and for awhile looked intently on the green mound before him. He then slowly and solemnly *waddled* from the grave! I followed him. Before he reached the churchyard gates I passed him. In

passing, I said, 'You had a good father.' 'Ye-e-e-s,' in an idiotic, but grateful tone, he answered, the tears still trickling down his face. 'You loved your father?' He answered as before. 'And now you love his memory?' There was no change in his manner—no response. 'And soon you hope to meet your father.' The same word was uttered, but in a tone so full of hope! 'God bless you, my poor man,' I said audibly. The idiot was evidently sensible that I was not his foe.

"They tell me there are boys who delight in tormenting *that* idiot; that there are men who sometimes induce *him* to drink intoxicating liquors, for the gratification of seeing that idiot drunk.

"Other fathers are buried in Edenbridge churchyard. No grave, save that of the idiot's father, bears token of *such* filial affection."

Another letter shows the continuance of the strong friendship between Mr. Oastler and Mr. Stephens, and the tenderness and piety which was always part of Mr. Oastler's mind. Mr. Stephens had just lost one of his daughters by fever, suddenly:—

"Norwood, Surrey, Nov. 26th, 1851.

"The Rev. J. R. Stephens.

"MY DEAR OLD FRIEND,

"You know that I could not receive such tidings as you sent, without feeling more keenly than I could utter! But remember, *that flower* was *not* plucked

by a *careless* hand. With what care, and with how much pleasure, you had tended it in summer and in winter ; and when, at last, it was found too fragrant—too rich—too beautiful for *your* garden, what agony you felt when it was transplanted ! You could not then shake off that agony ! Do not forget, that plant still lives—that flower still blooms—and the fruit will ripen *better* in that garden than in yours !

“ Stephens ! God is never nearer to his people than when they are in trouble ! There is always a *why* and a *wherefore* : it is not for us to inquire.

“ Since I received yours, I have been ill. Maria writes this for me.

“ Tell me *immediately* how my kind friend, your dear wife is ? I hope better. Tell her to remember that our God is the God of comfort and consolation. Give our love to her, and the remaining *one* ! and remember me affectionately to your dear mother.

“ I do not know that you did right about Percival’s gift—I obeyed your orders ; I do not know if I did right—I have my doubts.

“ Never mind about Popery, now ; let it alone.

“ *God* comfort, and strengthen, and bless you ! Amen !!

“ Believe me always to be,

“ Yours most faithfully and lovingly,

“ RICHARD OASTLER.”

The remaining letter to be quoted here is from Lord Stanhope :—

“No. 14, Great Stanhope Street,
“May 11th, 1837.

“SIR,—I am favoured this morning with your letter of the 8th inst., and had already sent to the press my letter to Mr. Oastler, as I thought that if he wished to receive it in a printed form, it ought to reach him in due time before the meeting on Whit-Tuesday. I enclose a proof, by which you will find that it is too long to be published as part of the proceedings of the meeting, and indeed in that case it would not be expected that it would be given correctly. If, however, he should wish to read it to the meeting, it may first be transcribed and read in MS., and the printed copies, of which 1,000 will be sent him, may, if he should prefer, be distributed after the meeting has been held. I intend afterwards to forward copies to the *Morning Herald*, the *Champion*, and to different parts of the country. I shall be very glad to learn from you that Mr. Oastler approves of its contents, and I beg that you will present to him my best regards. I wish to call his attention to the last paragraph but one, as I am not without anxiety as to the danger that some persons may attempt to introduce matter into the Petition which would deprive it of its weight.

“I am, Sir,

“Your obedient, humble Servant,

“STANHOPE.

“To the Rev. J. R. STEPHENS.”

CHAPTER VI.

STORMY DAYS OF ADVOCACY.

POLITICAL agitations in England were managed better in the days of the Corresponding Society than in the time of the Reform Bill of 1832, or in that of Chartism in 1839. More persons of education, good position, and conspicuous ability, were leaders in the earlier agitation. The great French Revolution which first inspired them, afterwards destroyed, or discouraged and dispersed them; the wild excesses in France, which could never have occurred in England, were imagined to be the natural fruits of liberty. There were, however, examples in the days of which we write of meetings conducted with intelligent prudence, and yet not lacking fire and purpose.

On the 25th of Sept., 1838, there was a mass meeting held in the market-place at Roscoe Field, Sheffield. Mr. Ebenezer Elliott, the Corn Law Rhymer, presided. Of the 20,000 persons present, eleven-twelfths were said to be unrepresented in Parliament.*

Mr. Elliott said: — "Fellow-townsmen and

* F. Place, "W. M. A.," p. 230 to 232, vol. ii., 27, 820.

Neighbours, your character in London stands high. Don't do anything to forfeit that high character. Not only keep the peace yourselves, but prevent others from breaking it ; and inasmuch as it is your wish to obtain your rights by legal and peaceful means, you will, I trust, discharge your duty strictly, and discourage every speaker who may advise violent measures, for any such speaker brings only one person to your aid,—the one man in a thousand—and keeps away nine hundred and ninety-nine from joining you.

“It is proposed that our meeting shall commence with a hymn, which I will recite stanza by stanza, and you will sing it, accompanied by the band, to the tune of the Old Hundredth Psalm.”

Mr. Elliott then gave out the hymn, and the multitude sang it. From the solemnity of the tune, and the spirit-stirring nature of the words, a striking effect was produced. The words were :—

God of the Poor ! shall labour eat ?
Or drones alone find labour sweet ?
Lo, they who call Thy earth their own,
Take all we have—and give a stone !

Yet bring not Thou on them the doom
That scourged the proud of wretched Rome,
Who stole, for few, the lands of all,
To make all life a funeral.

Lord ! not for vengeance rave the wronged,
The hopes deferred, the woes prolonged ;
Our cause is just, our judge divine ?
But judgment, God of all, is Thine !

Yet not in vain thy children call
On Thee, if Thou art Lord of all ;
And by Thy work, and by Thy word,
Hark ! millions cry for justice, Lord !

For leave to toil, and not in vain—
For honest labour's needful gain :
A little rest, a little corn,
For weary man, to trouble born !

For labour, food ; for all their own :
Our right to trade from zone to zone,
To make all laws for us and ours,
And curb the will of evil powers.

Mr. Elliott continued :—" Fellow-townsmen and Neighbours ! Having been deputed by you to attend a meeting held in London on the 17th of September, and that meeting having been misrepresented by aspersions of the Press, you will perhaps wish to hear from me the truth, and justice to your fellow-men in London requires that the truth should be told."

He then said that the *Times* newspaper had described the Westminster meeting as not exceeding 5,000 in number, and he (Mr. Elliott) went on to show from calculation that there could not have been fewer than 20,000, besides the vast numbers who were coming and going away again in consequence of their not being able to approach within hearing distance of the speaker.

All this, and much more spoken by him, was admirably done in spirit and in judgment. The verses read by Elliott were written by himself ; he had a fine voice, and the manner of a

prophet in his public speech. The agitation for the Repeal of the Corn Laws was conducted throughout by a class of instructed politicians, who saw the benefits which increased trade would bring to the working people, long before they could comprehend all that was involved in the question. In the case of the Poor Law and Factory agitations, outrage and cruelty were more palpable than famine, and stung men of generous nature into indignation and violence; and the people themselves were excited and enraged. These agitations were marked by fierce invective and wild menace. A variety of political parties were mixed up in them. Mr. Stephens himself joined the Chartists when he had reason to believe that without popular power the poor could not obtain redress. He became a colleague of Feargus O'Connor, who had in him a "floating recklessness"* which dashed hither and thither with every wind of passion. As O'Connor did not understand Democratic principle, and as Mr. Stephens who did understand it, did not care for it, they troubled not to conduct their advocacy in that way which should give it character and win regard for it from those outside the Democratic movement. To them was joined James Bronterre O'Brien, another Irish orator and copious writer, who added to his national sense of dissatisfaction the furious theories of the French Revolutionists. He had more educa-

* A happy phrase applied to him by Alfred, the author of the best written history of the Factory Movement (p. 131).

tion than O'Connor, but like him his genius lay in denunciation, which in those days passed for fervid patriotism. The result was that Daniel O'Connell, who had a consistent sense of Democratic principle, and knew that legality was essential to its force, denounced Stephens, Oastler, and Feargus O'Connor* as enemies of the people. At the same time there was a body of London and Birmingham Radicals, working-class leaders of good political knowledge and high character, who proposed to attain popular liberty by means of argument and the education of the people. These men O'Connor ridiculed as "Moral Force Reformers." They, in their turn, denounced O'Connor and his colleagues as "Physical Force Chartists," the "Moral Force" party consisted of James Watson, Richard Moore, William Lovett, and John Collins of Birmingham. The little thought that O'Connor bestowed upon the character of the *Northern Star* was shown by the circumstance that the first number of the new tribune of all patriots, contained a "Public Notice to the Unhappy," stating in good capitals that "THE ITCH COULD BE CURED IN AN HOUR :'" as though that was information of immediate importance to his readers.

Adversity is said to make a man acquainted with strange companions. Philanthropy sometimes brings around him unexpected associates, and at a Factory Operative Meeting, on May 27, 1850, in the Corn

* "Place on Stephens," vol. 27,820, MS. Room, Brit. Museum.

Exchange, Hanging Ditch, Manchester, to take into consideration the steps to be adopted to counteract the effects of "Lord Ashley's Treachery," the meeting was called in the names of the following persons :— Thomas Fielden ; Lord John Manners, M.P. ; George Banks, M.P. ; the Earl of March, M.P. ; P. H. Muntz, M.P. ; W. S. Crawford, M.P. ; Thomas Wakley, M.P. ; Thomas Duncombe, M.P. ; Feargus O'Connor, M.P. ; Henry Edwards, M.P. ; Richard Oastler ; Samuel Fielden ; W. B. Ferrand ; the Rev. J. R. Stephens. No one of them probably agreed with any other, but all agreed on the question of defending the Factory Act, which had then been passed, and was believed to be in danger of substantial and dangerous alteration in the supposed interests of capitalists or employers.

Lord Ashley, notwithstanding his great services to the Factory Cause, was denounced as a traitor by his Tory colleagues for assenting to a compromise upon the Ten Hours Bill. It was a dangerous mistake, but not "treachery": his honest labour for the Bill should have rendered such an imputation impossible. No wonder working men had the ailment of imputation when their Tory leaders had this disease of speech in such an aggravated form.

No public question is ever fought or debated out solely on the lines of essential difference of principle.

Many people take sides only because they hate the party opposed to it—not because they know or care much about the question contested. Tories helped in the Factory Question because they thought the Liberals were opposed to it. Radical and anti-Poor Law meetings were held. Anti-Poor Law and Ten Hour meetings were held simultaneously, until the public scarcely knew which was which. The Socialists of that day, though not political partizans as a body, joined from motives of humanity both in the anti-Poor Law and in the Ten Hours movements.

Many of the old co-operators and friends of that “cause” were among those holding official positions in the Ten Hours movement. At the great delegate meeting held in the Queen’s Hotel, Todmorden, in 1822, William Mallalieu was in the chair ; his name often occurs in that capacity. Mr. Mallalieu was remembered as the first man who subscribed one pound towards the little fund for establishing the Rochdale Co-operative Store. Of the Council of the Association for the Protection and Enforcement of Col. Fielden’s Ten Hours Act, Mr. Mallalieu was vice-president ; Mr. Thos. Livsey, of Rochdale, a school-fellow and valued friend of John Bright’s, was the general treasurer ; Charles Howarth, of Rochdale, was secretary—the same Mr. Howarth who discovered the plan of dividing profits in co-operative stores according to purchases. Familiar co-operative names occur in the reports of the meetings and councils held

in various towns in the north. Joseph Crabtree (father of James Crabtree of Heckmondwike), who was the first man to invite Feargus O'Connor from Ireland, was a political prisoner for two years in York Castle. Mr. John Avison was the chief secretary of the movement, the committee rooms being at 27, Bloom Street, Portland Street, Manchester.

But the co-operators were never led away by proposed remedies of violence. One of their leaders, Robert Buchanan, father of the present poet of that name, who also had a faculty of verse, wrote in the fiercest days of the agitation these "Anticipations":—

Creatures of error ! beings whose minds are but
A chaos of contending passions ! say :
When will you drown your petty feuds, and put
Trust in each other ? When will wisdom sway
Your actions, and bright Reason's glorious ray
Shed her clear beams on your benighted world,
As the returning sun from heaven's highway
Rolls back the night of darkness, and the herald
Of Truth proclaims her dawn ;—her banner be unfurled ?

Even now the shadow of a mighty change
Is coming o'er the nations ; Reason's power,
Is felt by all around, and doth unhinge
The rooted ills of time. Each passing hour
Brings nearer virtue's goal ; when peace shall shower
Her blessings on the world. The people's might
Is gathering fast. Though tyranny may lour,
The human mind eschews foul superstition's night,
And promises, ere long, a great and glorions light.*

* The *Northern Star*, Dec. 9, 1837.]

When politicians spoke plain, homely sense in those days, nobody noticed it or gave them any credit for it. What could be more useful, just, and dispassionate, than these words of John Collins, at a great meeting on Hunslet Moor, Leeds?—

“If you mistrust a man, and let him know that you mistrust him, and that you continually are trying to degrade him in the estimation of his neighbours by continuing this conduct, I say you soon give the man humiliating thoughts, or, what is worse, you make him reckless. He says, ‘They cannot think worse of me than they do,’ and he consequently becomes careless of his conduct and immoral in his practice. But if you take a man by the hand, show him you wish to raise him in the scale of society and make him respected, you will give him a motive for action; he becomes guarded in his conduct lest he should forfeit your esteem.”*

To do O'Connor justice, he had his lucid intervals when good sense charmed him. No sooner had Collins ceased speaking, than he rushed to the platform, “on purpose,” as he said, “to compliment Collins on his instructive, eloquent, and masterly speech.”†

The object for which these and some following citations are made, is to show that Mr. Stephens himself was one of the least denunciatory and vehe-

* *Northern Star*, June 9, 1838.

† *Ibid.*, June 9, 1838.

ment of the public men of distinction with whom he laboured.

O'Connor, to justify his own violence of speech, described in the following terms Lord Brougham's journey to York on a memorable occasion, and cited what he said on the way :—

“To Elland next Don Quixote journeyed, and, after a fair share of steam-eloquence, he journeyed on his way to Newmill, where he first heard the glad tidings of the ‘*three glorious days*,’ and thus did Sir Knight express himself : ‘*He (Harry) was glad, delighted to hear the joyful news, and hoped the day was not far distant when all royal heads would be made foot-balls for the boys to kick in the mire.*’ ‘*If,*’ said he, ‘*the Duke of Wellington should attempt to force a Bourbon upon the French throne, in opposition to the will of the French people, it would justify a revolt upon the part of the English nation.*’ ”*

It was remembered that Thomas Attwood, though a discreet agitator on the whole, had on occasions used language which had an ominous suggestiveness in it ; as when he said in the very year of the Chartist outbreak at Newport : “Two millions of men, acting under cautious and prudent leaders, with one heart and one mind, and if dire necessity should make it imperative, with one hand.”†

Augustus Hardinge Beaumont, editor of the

* *Northern Star*, March 31, 1838.

† Thomas Attwood : Speech, Town Hall, Birmingham, Jan. 1, 1839.

London Dispatch, proprietor and editor of the *Northern Liberator*, appeared in the North. The following speech shows what a wild vein he had in him, and what ability he had for ruining a cause, gratis :—

“Think not, my friends, that these acts shall go unavenged. Lord Gosford and Sir John Colborne shall yet be put upon their trial at Westminster Hall, and, being condemned, be hanged for their crimes, under the same statute under which suffered Governor Wall, albeit he too was protected in his atrocious act by the ministers of the day. As was Wall hanged, so shall be Gosford and Colborne.—(Cheers.)—And justice will not be done them unless Russell, and Melbourne, and Peel, are hanged along with them.—(Great cheers.)—According to law, on these detestable violators of the laws of God and man—(cheers)—never shall we have peace in England till the precedent set in the reign of Henry the Eighth, when Empsey and Dudley, two ministers, not half so bad, not half so criminal, were hanged by the neck ; oh, it was a glorious precedent.—(Vehement cheers.)” After showing how the Canadian civil war must affect our commerce and so bring down the wages of working men, and eulogizing the Canadians for their manly assertion of their rights, he concluded by expressing his detestation of all war as being only an accumulation of murder, but in struggling for liberty it was glorious to spill the life of the enemy of freedom, or to yield up one’s own.

"How, say you—are John Russell, commonly called Lord John Russell, and Lord Melbourne, guilty of treason, robbery, arson, and murder, or are they not guilty?—(Cries of "Guilty, guilty.")—Such of you as give your verdict of guilty, then, hold up your hands.—(Here the whole meeting held up their hands.)—Hearken to your verdict—you say the Ministers are guilty of treason, murder, robbery, and arson, and so you say all?—(Cries of "Yes, yes, we do.")—Oh! my friends, how I do wish that I could give effect to your most righteous verdict by pronouncing judgment of death and execution.

" Blood like this
For liberty shed so holy is,
It would not stain the purest rill
Which sparkles amidst the bowers of bliss.
Oh! if there be on this earthly sphere,
A boon, an offering, heaven holds dear,
'Tis the last libation liberty draws
From the heart which bleeds and breaks in her
cause."*

Sadler was accused of using violent language to his adversaries. It was stated in the *Leeds Mercury* that he said to a manufacturer, "Sir, if I met you on a dark night and had a pistol in my hand, I would shoot you." It was admitted by Mr. Edward Baines that Sadler did not say this. But his biographer allows that he oft had hurled anathemas at manufacturers as "enemies of the poor."†

Mr. Stephens spoke of John Fielden as the

* *Northern Star*, Jan. 13, 1838.

† "Life of Sadler," p. 408.

Ulysses of the Ten Hours Movement. In 1831 he was induced to take the chair at a public dinner given to William Cobbett in Oldham, which led to Mr. Cobbett being invited to stand for the then expected new borough. Mr. Fielden consented to stand with him, and it was thus that he was drawn into public life. His own words in 1838 were, "I am so far a Conservative that I do not wish to see the old English institutions destroyed ; I am so far a Conservative that I will exert myself to the utmost of my power, and I will call upon the people to back me, to prevent the destruction of those institutions which the Radicals never asked to be destroyed, but which it is now proved the Whigs wish to destroy."* These words were spoken at a dinner given to him in Manchester.

In 1834, Mr. Oastler was incessantly engaged on deputations to ministers and others ; in correspondence ; on the platform, and in writing letters to the press. A second edition of one of his more important letters—an octavo pamphlet of 34 pp., bore these words on the title-page :—"A letter to those sleek, pious, holy, and devout Dissenters, Messrs. Get-all, Keep-all, Grasp-all, Scrape-all, Whip-all, Gull-all, Cheat-all, Cant-all, Work-all, Sneak-all, Lie-well, Swear-well, Scratch-em and Company."

At a Huddersfield evening meeting, which lasted until a quarter to one o'clock the next morning, Mr.

* *Northern Star*, June 9, 1838.

Oastler said he would "explain his meaning as to what soldiers should do when called upon to act against the people, by an anecdote." It was that "he once knew an officer who was hated by his men ; he one day went whole skinned *into* action, and he was carried *out* of the field with forty bullets in his carcase." Mr. Oastler named the officer "Power" to whom this anecdote was to apply, and who was apostrophized thus, "Power ! hear and tremble."*

At a great public meeting held in December, 1837, at Bywater's Room, Manchester, on behalf of the Glasgow Cotton Spinners, who had a Trades' Union trouble on hand—some of their number being imprisoned—Mr. Oastler spoke thus : "Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, once more I appear before my friends, my neighbours, and my deadly enemies, for when I see bloody Whigs here, I know that I am in presence of my foes ; once more, after a long season of repose, I enter the field of Factory agitation. This night, in presence of a Russell spy, I, without one feeling of disloyalty towards my beloved Queen (whom God long preserve !), as 'King,' unfurl the royal standard of innocence—the standard of the Ten Hours Bill. Yes, Mr. Spy, you will, I hope, inform your bloody masters that I am a 'King,' nominated by Baines, and cheerfully acknowledged as 'King' by hundreds of thousands of honest Englishmen."†

When known Tories like Mr. Oastler, who had a

* *Northern Star*, Dec. 2, 1837.

† *Ibid.*, Dec. 23, 1837.

character as a gentleman to sustain, used inciting language of this nature, working-class politicians who fell in with "physical force" ideas should be condemned with discrimination.

The transported Dorchester labourers were always spoken of as the "victims of Whiggery." The Tories would have shot them, or transported them for double the time to which they were sentenced. But the orators of these violent times were not at all discriminating as to what they said of the "Whigs."

The animosity and jealousy with which working people, who were despairing and without any political power to improve their position, regarded the employing and governing classes, are now subsiding. The people have their "interests" now. The interest of labour has become as distinct as the interest of property; and each interest now can take a more dispassionate view of its relation to other interests than formerly.

Mr. Pitkeithley, of Huddersfield, said at the Ashton-under-Lyne meeting, that while the people were starving, and Dorchester labourers were transported for combining to raise their wages, the House of Commons readily voted an increase of £8,000 a-year to the Duchess of Kent's allowance.* As late as 1850 the following speech was placarded about the northern towns:—

* *Northern Star*, Jan. 6, 1838.

"A Model Speech for Members for Parliament.

"(From the *Times* of March 9th, 1850.)

"COLONEL SIBTHORPE would not vote on either side, as he had no confidence in either party. He was curious to know how far the right hon. gentleman, the member for Tamworth (Sir Robert Peel), would go now in supporting the man of 'unadorned eloquence' (Mr. Cobden).—(A laugh.)—He would try the sincerity of the Government when the Estimates came regularly before the House. He looked upon the entire system as one of corruption, and rather than vote for either of the parties now before them, he would take his hat and leave the House.—(Laughter.)

"[The hon. and gallant Colonel then took up his hat and left the House.]"

Colonel Sibthorpe was but the spokesman of a large party who were never so happy as when they could find reasons for doing nothing. To proclaim distrust of "both parties" was, and is, still a popular way of preventing anything being done.

It was observed that "the Queen's Speech in 1837 consisted of sixty-three lines only, while the indictment against the Glasgow cotton spinners occupied nearly thirty quarto pages of print. In the Queen's Speech there was not one word of Universal Suffrage; no sound save that of the

musket in reference to the New Poor Law Amendment Act.”*

It is related that when Count D’Orsay† was asked his opinion touching Mr. Spring Rice’s qualifications for office, he answered, “All I have to say is, that when I saw the cut of his last coat I drew my money out of the Funds, having no confidence in his judgment.” When Lord Morpeth was nominated for the Chief Secretaryship of Ireland, the Count was appealed to at a party at which he was present for his opinion. His intelligent reply was, “I never did see him but one day in the park, and he may do, if he will only change his tailor.” These sort of speeches were thought wittier and wiser than the most earnest speeches in favour of restrictions on the tyranny of manufacturers. The poor, being without hope, turned a willing ear to violence, which might produce change, and could not possibly make things worse for them.

When the poor workman is without bread, and sees that Death is his only friend, he, as a man, may be partly excused if he lends a favourable ear to projects of physical-force relief. It enables him to perform the only act of independence remaining to him—that of choosing his own time and way of leaving a world where he is not wanted.

An American editor, with the vivid humour which

* *Northern Star*, Nov. 25, 1837.

† A great leader of fashion and companion in the revelries of George IV.

is the characteristic of his profession, said of a deceased loungeur, that he had sat so long in his office that when he died his shadow was found fixed upon the wall. There is no doubt that great wrongs and long-continued sufferings, ending in despair, leave their shadows imprinted upon the minds of the generation which has known them—shadows which are oft transmitted to generations which have been themselves free from the evils reflected.

CHAPTER VII.

PASSAGES FROM HIS SPEECHES AND SERMONS.

THOUGH Dr. Johnson did think it strange of Hierocles, who, when he wanted to sell his house, carried a brick round in his pocket as a specimen, there are circumstances under which that plan may be useful. There are people who buy houses who would derive advantage from seeing first the quality of the bricks of which they are built. The following passages from Mr. Stephens' orations and sermons, come under the objection of being but fragments of an edifice from which the reader can gather but little idea of its design, proportion, and character. They will nevertheless serve to suggest the quality of the structure from which they are taken.

These passages are derived from ordinary newspaper reports, from papers which were never rich in literary resource, and seldom able to command the services of competent reporters. In every case Mr. Stephens spoke much better than the report represents him. At all times he must have spoken with great deliberation, distinctness, and accuracy, or

the reports remaining could not be what they are. It was the Poor Law which first caused him to take up the defence of the people against it. After forty-three years, it is impossible, on reading what he said, not to catch the feeling of his splendid invective. The opening of his oration at Saddleworth are the words of a born orator, who finds every season and circumstance by which he is surrounded, minister to his speech. His defence of himself as a political preacher was intended for other ears than those of his audience. His citation of Bishop Latimer's speech to the Lord Protector was addressed to the Bishop of Manchester. Mr. Stephens used the resources of his human knowledge, as did Edward Irving, to enforce what he considered religious justice. His speech on the Glasgow Cotton Spinners' Case, proves that the poor fellows got sympathy and advocacy from Ministers of religion in England which they did not meet with in their own country. The passages from Mr. Stephens's speech at Manchester,* show that his eloquence was not all invective—its illustrations, ecclesiastical and classical—all indicate that the inspiration of this orator was that of the old prophets, who were the fearless speakers for the people. The charge of murder was withdrawn against the Cotton Spinners: it was intended to hang them, judging from the spirit and the *terms* in which the indictment was drawn. His speech on

* *Northern Star*, Dec. 30, 1837.

the Poor Law, "the Law of Devils," and a further speech in which he uttered his defiance of Lord John Russell, all show the fire, vehemence, and spirit which characterized his orations. The passages from his various sermons might be greatly extended, but the one, the "Rising Tide of Time," shows what a fine vein of meditative feeling was also in him. "What a Foreign Bishop did," "Salvation to those who serve—the Queen at a Wild Beast Show," and "Naming a Minister," are examples of his power and readiness. His repugnance to a "Democratic Chapel," the discernment with which he speaks of the "Social Morality of Co-operation," his descriptions of "Song-smiths and Word-smiths,"—made towards the close of his life—show no abatement of his fertility, his wisdom, earnest thought, and happiness of expression. In some of his speeches the reader will find retained signs of the feelings with which they were received when spoken. They show the quick discernment as well as the passions of the times.

The passage quoted from his sermon upon the death of Henry Hindle shows the interest he took in his neighbours and hearers. The Hindles were a remarkable family of three brothers—John, a bookseller of Stockport, is known for his great interest in social and political affairs. James, a keeper of a Turkish bath, was inspired by Mr. Urquhart, and displayed the most intelligence and enthusiasm of any who followed that business. He was also the writer of

the best verses concerning Mr. Stephens, of which many appeared from local poets. Henry, who was blind, and of whom the funeral sermon was spoken, had a singularly clear, penetrating voice, and an oracular confidence in the opinions he expressed, and excelled all blind men whom I ever knew in ingenuity. His mechanical inventions were numerous, quite original contrivances, and most of them constructed by his own hands, he working amid dangerous machinery without wounding himself.

The Poor Law in the Court and the Cottage.

“No, sir! It is beyond bearing—it is beyond all British endurance, that while the dowager queen of these realms is to be still maintained in all but regal splendour.”—(Mr. Stephens was here very much interrupted by the employers on the bench, and their overlookers below the bench. Cries of “Question, question!” were continually uttered, followed by counter cries of “It is the question!” and great cheering.) Mr. Stephens, turning to the interrupters, said, “I was not saying it is wrong that the dowager queen should have this maintenance; I was not saying that she ought not to have it; but I do say, that *if it be right* that *she* should have secured to her £100,000 a year because she is the widow of a man who served the country as a king; *if it be right* that the wives of the Poor Law Commissioners

should enter the presence and bask in the smiles of royalty itself, and have £2,000 a year to live upon, even while their husbands are living ; *if it be right* that Lord Brougham should enjoy a retiring pension of £5,000 a year, then, I say, it is not to be endured that the widows of Englishmen, whose husbands have died off their mules and their looms, their spades and their ploughs, should be thrust into a 'bastile' to starve, and their fatherless offspring sent, at eight years of age, to be murdered by the death-dealing labour of a factory."*

Exordium of the Oration at Saddleworth.

"Are these the bleak hills—are these the brave men of Saddleworth? Do I at length stand before the hardy sons of a sturdy soil, the chosen children of liberty, who have been nurtured in the principles of the purest patriotism, renowned for the sternness of their virtue, and the steady determination with which they oppose the enemies of their country? If truth, and freedom, and love, have a dwelling-place on earth, it must surely be among such valleys, beneath the shield and shelter of such mountains as rise up around us here—well, then, men of Saddleworth, you who have heard Strickland, and Morpeth, and Brougham *prate* of liberty, until you almost dreamed yourselves the freest of the free—you, who have been paraded as the *brave and hardy*

* Speech reported in the *Northern Star*, Nov. 8 1837.

mountaineers who, at every call of your chieftains, were to muster in valorous and proud array until ye deemed yourselves as invincible in fight, as wise in council, and incorruptible in virtue—men of Saddleworth, tell me what have your boasted *principles* produced—what have been, what are *now*, the fruits ?”*

Defence of himself as a Political Advocate.

The report in the *Northern Star* says, the Rev. J. R. Stephens, on rising to support the resolution, was received with several volleys of applause. He said, “I am proud, Mr. Chairman, to follow the two men who have last spoken : the first was a bricklayer, the second was a joiner ; men of two crafts that are needed in building up the ‘earthly house below.’ (Hear, hear.) I belong to a craft, the first and last lesson of which is that there is only one foundation on which we all can build, that foundation being this : ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.’ (Cheers.) That foundation being the basis of the whole superstructure, whose top stone and whose banner is ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace and goodwill towards men.’ (Loud cheers.) Unless, Mr. Chairman and gentlemen, the two worlds can be brought together, unless the laws of Heaven be those of earth, unless the blessing of the Supreme

* Public Meeting of Weavers of District of Saddleworth. *Northern Star* Report, Dec. 9, 1837.

be the enjoyment of the created, unless the legislation of the Eternal be the spirit of the legislation of us creatures of a day—then, either there is no God, and we are in the shadowy sea of doubt and uncertainty, or we have the knowledge of God in our legislation, but deny the power. (Loud cheers.) It is my and your province,—of you as working men, and me as a minister of the Gospel,—to show to the country and the world that we have so learned the ‘law of love’ in the good old book, as to be determined, either that that law shall be established and enforced, and carried into zealous and perfect execution, or that you will plant the leverage of your mighty power and resistless energies under the foundation of all bad law, heave it at its centre, hurl it into the sea, and begin afresh, as God would have you begin. God will strengthen you throughout that work, and cause his blessing to shine upon you whenever you shall have finally accomplished it. (Cheers.) My hopes are to-night fulfilled. (Hear, hear.) The cup of my joy runs over to-night. Manchester is up! Manchester is out! Manchester is awake! Manchester is alive! Manchester is at her post! Manchester has sworn this night to do her duty! (Immense cheers.) This is a night never to be forgotten here, never to be forgotten in the country.”

“I will speak here as a lawyer and as a minister of the Gospel, and I will say that from the law of

the land, and from the law of God, there is such a point, to which Government has arrived, that I believe now the question is, not whether O'Connor, Oastler, and myself shall talk about shedding the last drop of our blood, and exhorting the people to follow our example, but that the only question is whether this be just the nick of time when this ought to be done!

“ Sir, I know there are those in Manchester who would say this is very violent language—(Hear, hear)—very violent in Mr. O'Connor, who is a barrister, but more so in me as a Christian minister. (Hear, hear.) The men who say so do not understand what the Christian ministry is, or what it was appointed for ; they know nothing at all of the practical and goodly purposes of Him who is our head, who made us His ministers and your servants for Christ's sake. (Cheers.) You know of good old Bishop Latimer. You shall hear what he was in the habit of saying on the Glasgow cases of his day. If he had been now Bishop of Manchester, he would have been here to-night—(Hear, hear,)—and if the ministers of Manchester had courage enough to do their duty, they would be standing here in my place, and I should be looking after my flock in Duckinfield. (Cheers.) Bishop Latimer went as Nathan went to David, and said, ‘Thou art the man.’ ‘I hear of many matters,’ says he, ‘before my Lord Protector and my Lord Chancellor, that cannot be heard. I must desire my Lord Protector's grace to hear me in this matter, and

that your Grace would likewise hear poor men's suits yourself. Put them to none other to be heard ; let them not be delayed. The saying is now that money is heard everywhere ; if a man be rich, he shall soon have an end of the matter. Others are fain to go home with tears, for any help they can obtain at any judge's hand. Hear men's suits yourself, I require you, in God's behalf, and put them not to the hearing of these velvet-coats and upskips. Now, a man can scarcely know them from ancient knights of the country. A gentlewoman came to me, and told me that a certain great man keepeth some lands of hers from her, and that in a whole year she could but get one day for the hearing of her matter ; and on that day the great man brought on his side a sight of lawyers for his counsel, and that she had but one man of the law ; and the great man so shakes him that he cannot tell what to do ; so that when the matter came to the point, the judge was so mean to the gentlewoman that she should let the great man have a quietness in her land. I beseech your Grace, that you will look to these matters ; hear them yourself ; view your judges, and hear poor men's causes." Turning to the judges, Latimer said, 'And you, proud judges, hearken what God saith in His holy book : Hear the poor, saith He, as well as the rich. Mark that saying, thou proud judge. The devil will bring this sentence at the day of doom. Hell will be full of such judges, if they repent not and

amend. They are worse than the wicked judge Christ speaketh of ; for they will neither hear men for God's sake, nor fear of the world, nor importunity, nor anything else ; yea, some of them will command them to ward, if they be importunate. I heard say, that when a suitor came to one of them, he said, "What fellow is that that giveth these folks counsel to be so importunate? He should be committed to ward." Marry, sir, commit me then ; it is even I that gave them this counsel ; and if you amend not, I will cause them to cry out upon you still, even as long as I live.'

"Now-a-days' (says Latimer), 'the judges are afraid to hear a poor man against the rich ; they will either pronounce against him, or drive off the suit that he shall not be able to go through with it. But the greatest man in the realm cannot so hurt a judge as a poor widow,—such a shrewd turn can she do him. The cries of the poor ascend to Heaven, and call down vengeance from God. Cambyzes was a great Emperor, such another as our master is ; he had many lord presidents, lord deputies and lieutenants under him. It chanced he had under him, in one of his dominions, a briber, a gift-taker, a gratifier of rich men. The cry of a poor widow came to the Emperor's ears ; upon which he flayed the judge quick, and laid his skin in the chair of judgment, that all judges that should give judgment afterwards would sit in the same skin. Surely it was a goodly sign of

the judge's skin,"* Mr. Stephens added, "I pray God we may once see the sign of the judge's skin in England."

The Poor Law ; the Law of Devils.

"If Lord John Russell wanted to know what he (Mr. Stephens) thought of the new Poor Law, he would tell him plainly he thought it was the law of devils, and that it ought to be resisted to the death, even if the first man that might be slaughtered in opposing it should be Lord John Russell himself. They had, at Ashton, come to the determination that when next March should come they would vote no more for guardians. Let the man who would dare to accept the office of guardian take the consequences upon his own head. He told them this, because he thought they ought to know. If it was to come, let it come ; it should be an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, limb for limb, wife for wife, child for child, and blood for blood—(Loud cheers) so help their God and their country. (Continued cheers.) Should the best feelings of human nature thus be torn asunder, he knew a law that would be stronger and more powerful than the law of the land—it was the law of Nature. He knew a force, mightier and more resistless than armed policemen, horses' feet, artillery, or troops and dragoons. It was the force of the tear trickling from a daughter's eye ; the sigh of a wife of a working man's bosom. The force was the magic power that beamed in a woman's

* *Northern Star*, Dec. 30, 1837.

eye, imploring, begging, looking through her tears and darting the pointed shafts of Nature's eloquence to the heart and arm of her husband, and exclaiming, 'Husband, husband, will you suffer this? will you allow the wife that came to you a blooming and innocent maiden, that came to share the joys and sorrows of your cottage—the woman that has borne you these children—that has buried others—that has wiped the tear of sorrow from your eye and the sweat of anguish from your brow—the woman that has been true when all things else were false—kind when all others have been unfeeling and relentless—that has sympathized with your sorrows, forgiven your wanderings—whose arms have always been opened to take you home, and whose innocent breast has always been your resting place?' Can Government, can policemen, can armies—all the armies of fiends—can they stand against a nation's arm and a nation's grasp, when woman—when our own wives and daughters lie imploring protection and vengeance at our feet? (Tremendous cheers.) Once more then, I register before Heaven, and record before you, my determination never in any way, in any shape, or at any time, to obey that law. The moment that law is declared to be in operation at Ashton, that moment my office, as the people's leader and guide, is at an end." (Repeated and long continued cheering.)*

* Anti-Poor Law Meeting, Carpenters' Hall, Manchester, Feb. 10, 1838.

*On his Consistency in Pulpit and on Platform—
Defiance of Lord John Russell.*

“He wondered much that Lord John Russell should take the trouble, and put the country to the expense of sending down men to look after him. He knew where he lived, and he knew he was a loyal subject of the Queen. He knew that he was no flincher; that he never called back a word he ever said on any subject; that he never said one thing to ‘the masses,’ as they chose to call the people, and another to the myrmidons of power—(Cheers)—that he had never said one thing at his fireside and another at the hustings, or one thing in the committee-room and another in the pulpit; but whether he stood as a messenger of mercy from God to man, in his own proper vocation, or, as a preacher to thousands, as on the present occasion, he had done only as he ever would continue to do, in the self-same words and in the self-same way. If, therefore, Lord John Russell wanted to know what he thought, he told him at once that he was determined to preach to the people so long as he had lips to utter a sound.

“In conclusion, he would say, as he had said before, that he would never rest till the Poor Law was erased from the statute book, and the rights of the poor established in righteousness and peace. But if poverty was to be called a crime, and starved, and we were to suffer the separation of parent from child, and

husband from wife, then the era of the curse had arrived ; the time to be up and doing was fully come ; and he would not only tell it, and teach it, and argue it, and press it with all his power upon the people, but he would be found either in the rear, or in the flank, or in the midst, or in the van. (Tremendous cheers.) May God prevent that last and most awful and dire necessity, by teaching our senators wisdom, and our governors justice, by putting it into their hearts to protect their own property by protecting the property of the poor ; by putting it into their hearts to reverence God by behaving kindly to their fellow-men, and then we shall be one people, belonging to one Commonwealth ; then we shall be sheep of one fold, and the days of happiness and peace will dawn upon us. (Loud and continued cheering, which lasted for some time).”*

The Rising Tide of Time.

“I never see the sands of the old year ebbing, or hear the fearful sound of the rising tide of the new year welling up from the unfathomed depths of an eternity, that has been in part unfolded to us—the children of a day—I never feel the swell of this hidden time coming onward with its waves to meet me, but I think how much more needful than ever it is to leave the old, and take up the new—to end the old and begin the new, by making for myself sure work

* Anti-Poor Law Meeting, Bradford, June 9, 1838.

for that eternity, upon whose unknown shores my frail bark of life will soon be driven by the swiftly flowing stream of time, that hurries all alike along to meet the righteous judge of men.”*

Salvation is to those who Serve.

The Queen at the Wild-beast Show.

“When Christ, in the 25th chapter of Matthew, is unfolding the Divine things of that very eternal world, of which we have so much said to us, and is declaring who is to enter into everlasting life, and who are to depart into everlasting death, He tells us that those who have fed the hungry, clothed the naked, and visited the sick, these are they who are to go into everlasting life; because, inasmuch as they have done it unto one of the least of His followers, they have done it unto Him. On the other hand, those who are to go to hell—and there is a hell, there is an hereafter—those who are to go to hell hereafter are, not the Antinomians, not the Unitarians, not the Mahometans, the Pagans, the Catholics, or the Protestant Churchmen—there is not a word of all this—that is all left to stand or fall, to be judged and weighed after another standard; there is not a word about creeds, or articles of belief; there is not a word about any particular professions; there is not a word about any rites, or ceremonies, or institutions; there is not a word of

* Sermon at Ashton-under-Lyne, Jan. 6, 1839.

synods, of convocations, of conferences, or churches ; there is not a word about collections, and love-feasts, and class meetings, and sacraments, and missionary meetings ; there is not a word of anything of this kind ; but those who go away into everlasting death, they are men of all lands, tongues, trades, and politics, that kept bread from the hungry, that have refused to clothe the naked, and that have not visited and sympathized with the sick (Great astonishment). Christ says so. But until this Book be burned ; until it be found out Christ was an impostor ; so long as Christ is God over all ; so long as He is the one Law-giver who is able to save and to destroy ; so long it is so decreed that we may not go into judgment under a mistake ; that we may not find our way to the left hand in error, thinking that Christ has, as it were, withdrawn the curtain that hides the world of spirits from the world of flesh. Christ has sent forth the proclamation of high Heaven, and He has said that it is for all those who love their brother man by feeding, by clothing, by sheltering, or by letting him feed, and clothe, and shelter himself ; and that hell—hot hell, the fire that cannot be slaked, the worm that gnaws and cannot be killed—is for all those that have oppressed the hireling in his wages, the widow and the fatherless. Then God help and have mercy upon an infidel Government, an infidel legislature, an infidel cabinet, an infidel council, an infidel magistrate,

infidel capitalists, men of wealth, of all religions, and of all politics, and all creeds—the Lord have mercy upon them ('Amen,' from several voices); their day of judgment, though it slumber, does not sleep—though it tarry, is on its way though it be not yet fully in upon them. How my heart did bleed when I read it—whilst they go, court, and cabinet, and councillors of state, and the attendants of royalty—whilst they flutter, butterfly-like, around Her who ought to be a pillar of strength to the poor, as well as a pillar of glory to the great and the rich—how my heart bled when I read that these courtly attendants were conducting the Queen through the streets of London to the royal theatre—and for what purpose? To see the wild beasts of the forest eating Her children's food! (Very great emotion.) Good God! and art Thou merciful, and art Thou just—merciful to those poor whose bodies are lined and pitched with resin, that the 'skilly' may not scour them into the cholera morbus? Art Thou merciful to those, and art Thou righteous and just towards their oppressors? Dost Thou look down from Heaven, and behold the Queen of England, the nursing mother of this people, dragged to yonder dens to see the wild beasts brought from Africa—because we have so much spare food here—from the deepest forests of the woods; the lions, the panthers, the leopards, from all the regions of the world, having rounds of

beef, and legs of mutton, and live rabbits, and pheasants, and partridges—having all these—the choicest and the richest food in the land—whilst a few yards off, in the Strand Union Workhouse, more murders have been done upon the subjects of the Queen, more bloodshed, more awful crime committed than ever those lions, and tigers, and panthers, and bears shed when allowed by God to roam wild in the forest? I never was so struck with the awful contrast of condition in my life. The Queen is never told that Her people starve, that they pine, that they perish. She is never brought out to see the people fed. The future is too dark; what is about to come, if this be not changed, is too awful for my tongue to be trusted with the attempt to picture.”*

Naming a Minister.

“If all ministers would only preach an equal truth to the rich and the poor; if the Gospel were thus faithfully, impartially, *Divinely* preached in England for seven days, the end of the seventh day would behold the end of social tyranny as it afflicts the people. But ministers only read one side of the leaf of God’s word; the other is either pinned down, or scored out, or explained away until it means nothing, or worse than nothing. To show this I may state that not long ago I was arguing with one

* “Political Pulpit,” Sermon iii. Delivered at Staleybridge, February 24, 1839.

of the most learned and liberal of the Wesleyan Conference, on the infidel and cruel provisions of the New Poor Law Bill. In speaking of its damnable enactments, I was showing that no legislative act ought, according to God's law, to separate man and wife, parents and children. I cited the passage, 'What God hath joined together let not man put asunder.' And what do you think this learned Conference expounder said of this, the Word and the will of God his Master? 'Oh,' said he, 'that has nothing to do with it—it refers only to ecclesiastical and legal divorce, and goes only to prove that divorce should not be granted unless on good and sufficient grounds.' He went on to say, that, 'as to the poor man and his wife, or the poor man and his child, he had a right to separate them if they came to him for relief; because he was not obliged to give them anything; but if they did come, and he did give them anything, he had a right to annex to his gift what condition he pleased.'—(Name, name.) The minister who said this was the Reverend Thomas Galland, M.A., of Queen's College, Cambridge. I do not know that I should have named him only you Londoners are so curious. I do not know, however, that it is wrong, for if all my freaks and phrensies, as they are called, are given to the world, I know not why his discoveries in practical divinity should not also be made known, particularly as they are, I think, far more extraordinary than

mine, or any that have been attributed to me, although upon my shoulders have been heaped the sins of the people, whilst, like the scapegoat, I am hurried into the wilderness of persecution, there to meet imprisonment, or, for aught I know or care, to endure death itself.”*

Dislike of a “Democratic” Chapel.

“Until I was within a few yards of this room I did not know we were to meet in the *Democratic Chapel* of Hebden Bridge. What a strange, what a significant, what an ominous name! I thought I was acquainted with all the various sects and parties into which, unhappily, the Church of God has been divided. But there was one I knew nothing of—the *Democratic Church*! (Laughter.) What can be the origin and meaning of this singular, this most unnatural appellation? I will tell you what I judge it to be. If wrong in the view I have taken of it, set me right, that I may not convey a false impression respecting this very remarkable form of religion, or attempt to supply the defect in already existing forms of religion hereabouts. It struck me when I read the placard on the walls announcing the place of meeting, that the labouring people of this district had looked upon themselves as a despised, forsaken, outcast race of beings, and had wandered away from the fold, where

* Sermon, “Shepherd and Shepherdess Fields.” London, May 12, 1839.

they were, indeed, fleeced, but not fed—(Loud cheers)—and had gone into the wilderness, lost sheep without a shepherd—(Hear, hear, and a voice, ‘That was it’;)—and so they did the best they could for themselves, and blundered into democracy, having been told by somebody or other that democracy meant all that was true, and right, and good, applied to promote the well-being and happiness of the people at large. (Hear, hear.) Alas, that the Church, in any part of England, can thus drive her children from her path! I am certain there never would have been a *Democratic Chapel* in Hebden Bridge if the *Theocratic Church* had done her duty.” (Loud cheers.)*

What a Foreign Bishop did.

“If the relation between master and men were what it ought to be, men would have no need to strike, nor would the masters be driven to lock people out. (Applause.) Of all organizations in this country, that which was least understood, least studied, and least of all brought into usage, was the organization of factory labour. (Hear, hear.) They had organizations in almost everything else; but in important and vital matters affecting the very existence of labour on the one hand, and of capital on the other, they seemed to have arrived at no fundamental law; they seemed to be unable to bring any principle to bear on it, and the consequence was

* Sermon at Hebden Bridge, Aug. 18, 1849.

that throughout the whole of these islands, where capital has established so many manufactures, and where the labour of tens of thousands is gathered together, they had nothing but strife, disunion, and division.

“He hoped they would see the necessity there was for union before the sun of their opportunity went down. They saw how needful it was to have their committees connected, centralized, and organized, so as to do something which would raise factory labour to the same standard as other trades.

“Hundreds of years ago—so far from this being an innovation or intrusion into business, with which we have no right to intermeddle,—Eustace, a foreign bishop, came into this country, and into this very county, to proclaim the duty of Christian England, beginning its Sabbath at three o'clock on Saturday afternoon and to last till sunrise on Monday morning. And what said the old chronicle of England? That the shrewd people of Yorkshire would not hearken to him, and called him a fanatic. There was one fellow, a corn miller, of Wakefield, who said he would run his wheel round in spite of the bishop; but the old chronicle goes on to say that the wheel would not turn round, and the waters of the Calder would not make it go round, and he was obliged to knock off at three o'clock on Saturday afternoon.

“I was at church this morning, and heard the Vicar offer up this prayer—‘We humbly beseech

Thee so to dispose and govern the heart of Victoria, Thy servant, our queen and governor, that in all her thoughts, words and works, she may ever seek Thy honour and glory, and study to preserve Thy people committed to her charge, in wealth, peace, and Godliness." In wealth first, in peace next, and in Godliness last ; as much as to say, that if the people are not kept in wealth they cannot be kept long in peace ; and if they cannot be kept in wealth and peace, it is hardly likely they will much longer go on in Godliness." *

Social Morality of Co-operation.

"My sympathies are always with efforts of this description, because I know that those who make them are amongst the most meritorious of their class. They are men who would either do away with selfishness, or make selfishness an instrument of good to others. Your right to co-operate in trade rests on the same ground as that of any single individual to begin to trade on his own private account. And it the peculiar character of your co-partnery gives you an opportunity of fostering habits of thoughtfulness and frugality in those who aforetime were improvident and wasteful, you have so far conferred a great benefit upon society. It is also of advantage to persons of a certain order of mind, to be brought into connection with others of similar temperaments.

* Speech on Strikes and Lock-outs, Dewsbury, 1865.

and habits with themselves. Social intercourse in such cases strengthens and cheers ; friendships are formed which conduce to the mutual good of those who thus become acquainted with one another. It is one of the serious drawbacks of our crowded towns that the individual is lost in the mass. Associations therefore of every kind, which have a praiseworthy object in view, ought by all means to be encouraged. There are some hundreds here to-night, and each one of you seems to know many of those around him, and you are evidently happy in each other's company. Good fellowship, leading to the interchange of kind acts one toward another, is of more value than the mere profit you derive as shareholders in the concern."*

Songsmiths and Wordsmiths.

"Kingship, the office of king, is a trade ; it is a business. In our old speech we read of every kind of craft. You who spin and weave were called handicraftsmen, and the clergy were said to be learners, workers, and members of the priestcraft, not in the sense of cunning, not in our sense of subtlety and selfish aggrandizement, playing and toying and trading on the superstitions of men, on the credulity of men, on the ignorance of men—but the priestcraft was the highest of all callings in the world, and the same old English tongue that gave

* Co-operative Tea Party, Staleybridge.

us the word priestcraft also gave us the word kingscraft. I wish not by that word to convey to your mind any notion of trading on the abject servility of the nation ; on the blind, passive resistance of the people ; nothing at all of the kind. Kingcraft in those days was a holy calling, and the kings were bound to know how to govern, and governed by the laws accordingly. Now, that is what we expect by-and-by of the Prince of Wales. (Hear, hear.) In that day of which I am speaking—the day of simplicities, the day of realities, the day of individual freedom and mutual right ; in that day there was only one word as the basis of all trades whatever. That word still lives amongst us in two or three trades ; it still lives amongst us as constituting the name of thousands and tens of thousands of families. I mean the word ‘smith.’ You understand what is meant by blacksmith, and whitesmith, and silversmith. But you would not understand if I were to say that Milton and Shakespeare were ‘songsmiths ;’ but your forefathers would have called them that, and did call the like of them ‘songsmiths.’ You would not understand what I meant if I said that better men than I am, who stand on boards like these, were ‘wordsmiths.’ (Laughter.) But that was our title in years gone by. A poet was called a ‘songsmith ;’ and a speaker was called a ‘wordsmith,’—the man who could take his words in the same way as the blacksmith takes his iron, or the silversmith his

silver, and who could weld his words, working them together ; bringing them out of the storehouse of his mind, having first found them in the deep unfathomable mine of his own emotions, his own consciousness. (Cheers). Every man in that day was proud of understanding the business of his life, and he followed it under the highest sense of obligation and responsibility.”*

Funeral Sermon on Henry Hindle.

“ His mechanical genius, his mechanical application, his mechanical discoveries, were wonderful—some of them might be known to the world, and some of those he had left behind he trusted were in a state to be taken up by other mechanics and given to the world hereafter.” After speaking of him as a clever metaphysician, and a psychologist, he spoke of the agitation which was taking place in Lancashire and the surrounding counties in the year 1842. “ Henry Hindle took a deep interest in that agitation : in the heat of it Henry Hindle’s little brother, James, the youngest, aged seven years, whom he never heard of until a long period from the day he first saw him leading his blind brother—he had offered up many a prayer, if they were worth anything, for that little boy—well, he was leading his brother down Stamford Street, and a man knowing that Henry Hindle took a deep interest in political matters at that time, with a

* Padiham, March 2, 1872.

loud voice began to talk very hardly, and he dropped some ugly words about going at it and burning the town of Ashton down. Henry at once, very calmly with great firmness—and there was immense pressure in that quiet firmness of his—it seemed to come down like a screw, slow, but sure—he said ‘let the word be peace, law, and order.’ These words were afterwards repeated at all the meetings, and that little boy has since said that was the first opening of his mind. He never knew before that there was a world, or that it was out of gear. When the man was talking about burning down Ashton, he heard his brother with a quiet, dignified, and composed voice saying, ‘Let the word be peace, law, and order.’ That young intellect awoke; it was the first awakening of the mind of that boy, and he had been a seer ever since, and a thinker ever since.” After a very affectionate reference to the aged mother who was still alive, the preacher proceeded to read extracts from a number of letters which he had received concerning the life of Mr. Hindle. One person wrote, “I shall never see my loved and honoured friend Henry Hindle again in this life—he whom I admired at first sight—he whose voice pronounced words with such exactness that I was as one spell-bound. He whose face was as beautiful as Epicurus, and as classical. He whose hair was like Milton’s, long and smooth. He whose cleanliness was admirable—whose dress was neat, and whose shoes were polished to rivet attention,

as they did when I first saw him. He was a marvel of neatness and completeness, when his clear bright eyes fixed themselves on mine with kindness and love, we were friends. He was a gentleman—I was a boy. He was learned—I was not. He was a model which compelled me to study him and his praiseworthy ways. He could lecture upon almost any subject, compose essays of the greatest importance, and write lyrics of beauty and sweetness for the improvement of mankind, which made me nobler, and purer, and truer, when I read them and talked with him about them. Everybody that heard them liked them, and honoured him the more, as I did: his influence was so good, his manners so attractive, that he made young men to think and act their parts well in daily life. Aged men honoured him for his wisdom and understanding, and courted his company that they might spend their time in the wisest and happiest way, and kept him as long as they could for that laudable purpose. I did the same, and I cannot but regret that his end has come at last. We shall never eat bread and figs together with joy again, nor study how to live on vegetable diet on 6d. per day in the heart of the great metropolis of England, as we did when I went more than two miles every night to see him for the sake of himself in his days of blindness, and for the sake of his learning and instruction.” He could sing and fiddle to his own songs; this was one : —

If you seek for useful knowledge
Think for yourself ;
Let the wide world be your college,
Think for yourself ;
In a college so extensive,
Knowledge may be comprehensive.
Without being made expensive,
Think for yourself.

CHAPTER VIII.

HIS TRIAL AND IMPRISONMENT.

THE passages quoted in the previous chapter from Mr. Stephens's speeches and sermons give a fair idea of his readiness and vehemence of speech, but his defence on his trial would satisfy any reader in how large a degree he was capable of sustained eloquence. The effect of what he said was at anytime increased by a knowledge of his character. Francis Place, who had a good knowledge of Mr. Stephens, described him as "regardless of personal consequences"—this meant that he intended to accept the consequences, whatever they were, of the advice he gave to others. During the long time which elapsed between Mr. Stephens's arrest and his trial, he spoke and preached oftener and as vehemently as before.* Francis Place, who was one of the most dispassionate observers, and careful in the use of

* The Rev. W. N. Molesworth, in his *History of England*, remarks that "Stephens is said not to have displayed the resolution on his trial before the magistrates at Manchester, which his previous conduct seemed to promise." But he also records "when O'Connor hung back Stephens was undaunted," and that the Chartists collected £2,000 for his defence at Chester.

descriptive words, is unable to convey the effect produced by his rhetoric at this time. His statement is as follows :—

“Mr. Stephens preached two sermons, one in the morning and the other in the evening, at Staleybridge. Here the chapel was by no means large enough to hold the congregation, it was crammed to such excess that the people could not bear the pressure, whilst hundreds could not gain admission, and an adjournment therefore was made to the market-place, and there from a waggon Mr. Stephens preached.* His speech is described as animated beyond description : he condemned the Poor Law with fervour beyond imagination ; he condemned the Poor Law Commissioners with vehemence unparalleled, as the authors of the pamphlet signed ‘ Marcus.’ He put the matter into every form his imagination could conceive, and excited the horror of his audience to a pitch of fury which excited wonder in some who went as observers.”†

For a long time public meetings and associated bodies had passed resolutions of confidence in Mr. Stephens, and expressed obligations for his advocacy. O'Connor justified Stephens, and “pledged himself

* One writer in the newspapers of the time states that he listened to Mr. Stephens for a while, then went to Manchester, and when he returned Mr. Stephens was still speaking.

† Meeting, Chesney's Great Room, Foley Street, Marylebone ; O'Connor in the chair.—F. Place, “W. M. A.,” 27-821, vol. iii. pp. 8, 13.

to the meeting to hold firmly to him and never to forsake him."

At the Staleybridge dinner to Sharman Crawford, Esq., M.P., in January, 1837, Mr. Feargus O'Connor proposed the toast of "The Rev. J. R. Stephens and the Ten Hours Bill."* When the Rev. J. R. Stephens was introduced to the General Convention in London in April, 1839, he was received with enthusiastic cheering, which lasted for several minutes.† These instances show the national popularity Mr. Stephens had attained.

At a delegate meeting previously held in the West Riding of Yorkshire, at the Black Bull, Liversedge, in December, 1838, a resolution was passed declaring that the delegates assembled placed implicit confidence in Feargus O'Connor and the Rev. J. R. Stephens.

It was on the 27th of December, 1838, that Mr. Stephens was arrested. The names of the officers employed on this duty have been preserved—Goddard and Shacken. Mr. Stephens was leaving Ashton at the time, and Worsley being the nearest Petty Session to Leigh, Mr. Stephens was taken there in order to be produced before Lord Francis Littleton, who it was discovered could not act as magistrate, he not having qualified under her Majesty Victoria. Goddard and the magistrate's clerk went at half-past five o'clock in search of some one in the Commission of the Peace ;

* *Northern Star*, Jan. 13, 1837.

† Place's MSS., vol. iii, p. 98.

but they were not like Miss Brontë's curates, "thick upon the hills," for the messengers returned, after six hours' search, without having found one. At midnight it was determined to send Mr. Stephens to the New Bailey, Manchester. Although many people were not likely to be about in the night, two troops of dragoons were summoned from Manchester, and arrived on the spot before Mr. Stephens's post-chaise set out. Pickets were stationed at convenient distances all the way to Manchester ; along which route, guarded by a troop of dragoons, Mr. Stephens was conveyed. Another chaise, containing three reporters, went at the same time in the same company, guarded by half-a-dozen troopers. The *Manchester Guardian* reported that Mr. Stephens was in exceeding good spirits, and seemed to make very light of his situation.

A long examination took place on Saturday the 29th of December, at three o'clock in the afternoon, when it was agreed to liberate Mr. Stephens till the next sitting of the magistrates, upon bail, himself in £500, and two sureties in £250 each. Bail was tendered, but not accepted. An officer was directed to inquire respecting the sufficiency of the bail ; this was done, and on Saturday the 29th it was accepted, and Mr. Stephens was liberated.

On the 3rd of January, 1839, a further examination was held, when Mr. Stephens was committed to the ensuing assizes at Liverpool, bail being required for himself in the sum of £1,000, and two sureties

in £500 each. Bail was accepted the same evening, and Mr. Stephens was discharged from custody.

“The agitation caused by his apprehension was very remarkable. The whole body of Radicals felt it, and in Manchester and its environs great apprehensions were entertained of riotings and extensive mischief. All the associations called meetings, and vast numbers of people came to Manchester ready for mischief; but still no apprehension of any evil need have been entertained, as there was a sufficient military force to put down any body of rioters. This was well known to the mob, and nothing was to be feared from the assemblies of the Radicals, as it might have been reasonably expected that the leading men in these associations would prevent any of the members from attempting any improper interference with the due course of law.”*

Mr. Stephens's defence was thought highly of for its eloquence and dignity. As soon as arrests set in, O'Connor disclaimed having advocated physical force, and at the same time disparaged those who opposed it. In the sermons which Mr. Stephens delivered in the provinces and in London, he retracted nothing. Against hunger and personal oppression, and for the rights of domestic life, he was ready to fight, and believed God sanctioned such resistance.

* From Place's MS. “History of Working Men's Associations,” British Museum.

He better knew his mind than any other agitator among whom he was thrown. He had little sympathy with political remedies ; Chartism and the "rights of man" were not to his mind. All his politics were summed up in two principles—the justice of God and the comfort of the common people.

Mr. Stephens's trial took place at the Chester Assizes, on Monday, August 15, 1839. What follows is quoted from a *verbatim* report of the proceedings taken in shorthand by P. B. Templeton. It is not likely that Mr. Stephens had any opportunity of revising it—he being a prisoner. Indeed, the Templeton report was first published in the *Northern Star*, and therefore must have been transcribed at once from the original notes, so that the passages we quote from the defence show the accuracy, completeness, and force of Mr. Stephens's habitual expression.* He conducted his defence entirely himself, he cross-examined the witnesses, he discussed questions with the Judge and the Attorney-General, and was at all times clear, relevant, and self-possessed. The entire report would occupy nearly as many pages as this book—the passages given, therefore, are only such as will enable the reader to understand the course of the trial, and the more characteristic passages of the defence :—

Long before nine o'clock—the hour appointed

* Indeed, the only Report extant in a separate form is made up from the columns of the *Star*.

for the opening of the Court—a considerable crowd surrounded it, waiting to hear the case. About a quarter-past nine, Mr. Justice Pattison took his seat upon the Bench. The Court, a small building, not capable of holding more than 300 persons, was crammed in a few minutes; several ladies were present, and most of the magistrates for the county.

Mr. Welsby read the indictment charging the Rev. Joseph Rayner Stephens with “attending an unlawful meeting at Hyde on the 14th November, 1838, seditiously and tumultuously met together by torch-light, and with fire-arms, disturbing the public peace.” The indictment, in two other counts, charged Mr. Stephens with speaking at that meeting.

The rev. defendant appeared in person, and sat at the bar next to the Attorney-General. He was attended by his solicitor, Mr. J. Law, of Manchester.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL—Sir John Campbell—rose and said:—My Lord, Gentlemen of the Jury—I have the honour to attend you as counsel to conduct this prosecution against the defendant, Joseph Rayner Stephens. A bill of indictment has been found against him by a Grand Jury of the County of Chester. You are now to determine whether he is guilty, or not guilty, of the offence laid to his charge. Gentlemen, it humbly seems to me that it is indispensably necessary, under circumstances such as will be detailed to you in evidence, that the law should be vindicated, and that

such offences should be repressed and punished. The indictment, as you heard it opened by my learned friend, Mr. Welsby, charges Mr. Stephens with a misdemeanour, in attending an unlawful assemblage, and in inciting those who were present to disobedience of the law. This prosecution in no degree trenches upon fair inquiry, which I hope will ever remain unrestrained in this land of liberty. It in no degree interferes with the right of the subjects of this free country to meet in a quiet and peaceable manner to consider any grievance that they may think they labour under, and to apply by constitutional means to have these grievances redressed. Gentlemen, there may be the freest inquiry, there may be the most ample means of obtaining redress of grievances, without any violation of the law. Neither in this nor in any civilized country can it be endured that meetings should be held where the law is set at defiance, and where language is used that necessarily and inevitably leads to a disturbance of the public peace. Mr. Stephens, the defendant, took an active part in the assemblage at Hyde, and the question is whether he did not upon that occasion use language to the multitude which amounts of itself to misdemeanour, and one of a very aggravated nature. This meeting took place on Wednesday, the 14th day of November last. It took place after dark. There was a vast assemblage of people from different parts of that portion of the county of

Cheshire, and the adjoining county of Lancashire, Ashton, Staleybridge, Dukinfield, and other quarters. They assembled in great numbers after dark—I think seven or eight o'clock—at a place called the Cotton Tree, about a mile and a half from Hyde, which is a great manufacturing village in this county. There were assembled, I believe, about 5,000 persons, almost all strangers to the town or Hyde. The leader upon that occasion was Mr. Stephens, the defendant. I abstain most scrupulously from any allusion to the conduct of that gentleman, except upon this particular occasion, for which he is now called upon to answer in a court of justice ; but it is my duty to detail to you his conduct and his language at that time. He mounted the hustings, and addressed the assembled multitude. Amongst other things he told them that he had news for them ; that he had been in the barracks, and that the soldiers would not act against them. He said that there were several clubs that had bought arms with their burying funds, and that the funds set apart by these clubs for the purpose of the decent interment of their members were diverted from that purpose and appropriated to the buying of arms. He asked them if they were armed. By way of an answer to that question there was a discharge of firearms. He then said, “ I see you are ready,” and he wished them “ good night.” The assembly, such as I have described it to you, continued till nearly midnight.

They then took their departure. There were several bands of music ; there were a number of torches, and at midnight the torches were seen blazing through the streets of Hyde and on the roads leading into the country, and at last the distant music died away upon the ear. I understand that Mr. Stephens is to defend himself, an undoubted right that he enjoys. I understand that he possesses very considerable talents, and I have no doubt they will be exerted in trying to vindicate himself against the charges now brought against him.

Mr. STEPHENS then rose, and applied that the witnesses might be ordered out of court. The application was complied with, and the examination of the witnesses for the prosecution was proceeded with. At its conclusion the defence began, and at a quarter past twelve the defendant rose to address the Jury.

Mr. STEPHENS said :—May it please your Lordship and Gentlemen of the Jury—This day has not overtaken me unawares, nor has it found me unprepared. I have long since foreseen its coming ; I welcome it now that it has come. I have often told the poor, my lord, on whose behalf rather than my own I am here to plead, and in whose stead I am willing to suffer, though I have done nothing worthy of bonds—that the faithful and fearless advocacy of their righteous cause would eventually lead to scenes like this. My lord, it could

not be otherwise ; for that new species of tyranny which, in the name and under the forms of law, has of late years endeavoured to overturn the liberties of this country, could only hope for establishment and permanency by crushing and overthrowing all those, however humble, who had the heart and the hardihood to oppose it. This, my lord, is of the very nature of tyranny. It begins by first of all taking the weaker and the more defenceless. It draws off the eye, and lulls to sleep the suspicions of those who would oppose it in the first instance, either by the promise of some immediate advantage, or by holding out hopes of greater security and benefit to themselves. But stealthily and insidiously as it begins, it must, my lord, go on, taking us one by one, until one by one we have become enclosed within its net, and lie prostrate at its mercy. You, gentlemen of the jury, as well as myself, are an example in proof of this. You may well ask yourselves—you may well inquire of one another why and for what purpose it is that you have been placed in that box ? I need only remind gentlemen of your station and intelligence, of the origin and professed reason for the establishment of the special jury system. It is but of yesterday that special juries were known at all in this country—not longer since than the reign of George the Second. The cause assigned for this innovation upon our ancient institution was, that there might arise, in the complicated and intricate

nature of commercial transactions, questions which men moving in the ordinary spheres of life would not be capable thoroughly to understand, and rightly to adjudicate upon. Here, my lord, I may be allowed to say—such is my veneration for all the institutions of my native land—that it would have been much better, in that case, instead of laying aside the old usages and practices which have been the palladium of our liberties, to have required that gentlemen engaged in commerce should so have simplified their transactions as to bring them within the range of the understandings of the commonalty of this country, rather than have introduced any change in the forms of our civil and criminal jurisprudence, as we find now has been the case. But, gentlemen, allowing, that these innovations, which I am bold enough to call corruptions in the institutions of our country, were just and reasonable for the purpose professed at the time, you would agree with me that this is not a case which calls for such an extraordinary departure from the ordinary usages in our courts of justice. If this were a simple case, as the Attorney-General wishes you to believe it to be, of attending that meeting, a meeting so clearly unlawful that he needed not to say five words on the subject; if this were a case so simple, and the mere fact of the meeting having been so convened and held, the mere fact of my having attended that meeting and said

certain words was all that was requisite to be proved, then, I ask you what reasonable pretext there is for your being present in that box upon this occasion? There must be something behind the scenes—there must be something that remains untold, something which the learned and honourable Attorney-General has designedly left undisclosed. It will be my duty to withdraw the curtain from that which at present is legally hidden from your eyes. I know not in what manner special juries are got together; you do not know in what manner special juries are got together—the Attorney-General may know. Suffice it for me to say that I have not objected to you. When the list of forty-eight was sent down to me, who was struck off I cannot tell. I made no objection against that list; I have not struck off a single individual of that number of forty-eight, nor do I object to any gentleman now present, notwithstanding all the reports, all the rumours, all the more than credible reports I have heard on this subject. My lord, I have been advised, I have been urged to apply to your lordship for a postponement of this trial, in consequence of the most excited state, not only of the public mind in general, but of the public mind of the inhabitants of Chester at this moment. It is a matter of notoriety, it is upon your walls, it is within every man's knowledge, that a letter has been written by the attorneys conducting this prosecution, instructing the mayor and

authorities of this ancient and really peaceable city, that a rescue is to be attempted ; that mobs, multitudes, armed assemblages of men, are upon their march to the city of Chester, for the purpose of rescuing voluntary defendants, or involuntary prisoners, out of the hands of justice, even in the presence of an English judge. My lord, I ask whether this is fair ; I ask whether in any other place than in an English court of justice, whether under any other presidency than that of a constitutional judge, and before any other array than that of an honest English jury, it would be possible for a defendant, situated as I am, to have a fair and impartial trial ? Why, my lord, when I came into the town, I came unbound, and I came without any legal fetters, pains, penalties, or disabilities upon me !—I have three indictments hanging over my head, to one of which I am called this day to speak : each of these indictments, if its allegation be substantiated, renders me liable to a sentence of imprisonment for life, and I may be otherwise imprisoned, and otherwise sentenced to pay a fine, which would render the extent of that imprisonment to the term of my natural life ; and yet with three indictments over my head, I am held to bail upon all of them ; I have been since the month of March a free man. It is evident from this that the Crown cannot consider me the dangerous person the Attorney-General has endeavoured to represent me to-day. If, my lord, I had committed

the criminal acts, if I were the man whose principles and intentions were such as have been represented to the jury, in the speech of the hon. and learned Attorney-General, I say it would have been impossible for the Government to have allowed me to remain at large in the way it was done. What inference can I draw from this, except it is an inference, as the learned Attorney-General says, which necessarily and inevitably arises from the premises, that the Government wished me quietly and peaceably to walk away and to escape meeting this charge? But, though I have reason to believe that to be the wish of the Government, though I have reasonable ground to believe that the Crown had no wish and no intention to prosecute this inquiry, which has been forced upon it to-day, yet so conscious am I of my own innocence, and so fully am I persuaded that I shall be able to convince the jury of my innocence, that, without bail, without bond, without liability to appear, I throw myself not upon the mercy or indulgence, but upon the sense of justice which pervades this court.

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In the latter end of December, shortly after the burning of the factory which has been alluded to, I was arrested under extraordinary circumstances. Two Bow Street officers, one of whom had in his pocket an authority to call up the whole military

force of the district, hurried me away upon a warrant charging me with making a speech of a tendency to destroy life and property, from Ashton-under-Lyne to Worsley, in the neighbourhood of Leigh, the place where the speech was said to have been delivered. When we reached there, no magistrate could be found, nor witnesses to meet me face to face. I was then taken to Manchester, in the dead of night, escorted by a troop of dragoons, and consigned to the New Bailey prison. When I did come before the court, one of the magistrates who endorsed the warrant could with difficulty be found, or induced to appear. On the second examination, he would not come at all. In the examination—one of the most extraordinary that ever took place in an English court of justice—the forms of the Court were so far departed from, that no part of the cross-examination of the witnesses on my part should appear. All that those witnesses had stated against me was there ; all that they stated in my favour was omitted. The proceedings were altogether so singular, so irregular, and I will say, rather of a persecuting than of a prosecuting nature, that before I was committed, the learned counsel who conducted the case stated in court that it was his intention to prosecute me for conspiracy, along with others, for obstructing the laws, but more particularly those relating to the Poor Law Amendment Act. I went down to Liverpool, bound in the sum of £2,000, a most

unconstitutional bail in any case of that kind—especially in the case of a person circumstanced as I was. I went to Liverpool to appear to answer all charges that should be brought against me. A true bill was found—a second bill was found, of which likewise I had no previous intimation. The circumstances said to have transpired in that second bill occurred in the month of December last ; and yet, as in the case of the present indictment, there have been no depositions—no informations—no examinations before the magistrates, no opportunity afforded me of meeting my accusers face to face.

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My lord, I will ask further, why am I to be tried at all ? A man who, the Attorney-General has told you, sustaining the character and fulfilling the office of a minister of religion ; a man known to advocate no political theory whatever ; to belong to no political party ; a man who has no connection with any political party in this country ; who has sedulously, from Christian principles, stood aloof from all the questions that agitate the public mind of a political nature ? If, my lord, my life and those humble talents which the Attorney-General has been pleased to compliment, had been employed in speaking against the constitution of this kingdom—against the monarchy, the House of Lords, the House of Commons ; if I were a man whose public conduct had

been of this description, then I might well have been marked out as a fit subject for a criminal prosecution. But, it is notorious to the whole country, so far as my proceedings have attracted the notice of the public, that so far from advocating any scheme for the purpose of effecting political changes for overthrowing the constitution, one of my principal endeavours has been, by reason and Scripture, by authorities taken out of our old law books, and from the Word of God, to disabuse the public mind of all those prejudices of the party to which the Attorney-General belongs, a party which has been mainly instrumental in consigning the people of this country to its present unsettled and disturbed state. It is notorious that I have lived in a part of the country which for years has been the scene of infidelity—overrun with principles, religious and political, similar to those of Thomas Paine, Richard Carlile, and men of that school—a district, the people of which have been saturated with the false and dangerous notion of “the greatest happiness to the greatest number,” as though, my lord, it was not *equally unjust and criminal to seek the happiness of the greatest number at the expense of a few, as to compass the happiness of the few at the expense of the many*. For years I have lifted up my voice against the folly of these Liberal notions. I have embraced every opportunity of showing to the people that the principles of what is now called

liberalism and reform are the most dangerous principles that can be entertained by any. I have shown the people that instead of removing institutions they ought to amend them—that instead of asking for anything new they ought rather to go back and look to what the wisdom of their forefathers so carefully, and I will add, my lord, religiously, laid down as the foundation of civil and political liberty. I have taken every opportunity of showing that, so far from the people—as the party to which the Attorney-General belongs asserts—being the source of all political power, I have maintained, out of the Word of God, that all power is of God—that the powers that be are ordained of God—that there are certain immutable principles of truth which no times can change, and which no circumstances ought to modify, excepting such cases as do apply themselves to the emergencies of the occasion, without at all altering their nature and character. I have maintained that these immutable and everlasting principles of truth—of righteousness—of brotherly kindness, and of charity, contained in the Scriptures, if they are to be found anywhere on earth out of the Word of God, are to be found in this country; if they are to be found in any constitution on the face of the globe, they are to be found in the constitution of England; if they are to be found inspiring and animating any institutions, breathing life into any customs, and producing happiness in any usages, they are to be

found in the institutions, customs and usages of our forefathers.

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In truth, my lord, in the case of the Whigs, at the time of the Reform Bill, we find that meetings precisely of the character of those I am charged with attending, were held in every part of the country; we find ensigns, flags and banners, inscribed with "Liberty or death," "Reform or vengeance," "Down with the tyrants," caps of Liberty, and banner staves headed with pikes, and everything of that description. We find the people of the country recommended to stop the supplies, to pay no more taxes, to compel "Old Billy," as those learned and loyal gentlemen undertook to denominate William IV., the Sovereign of these realms, to pass the Reform Bill. You find "three groans" proposed for the Queen, *the first female in the land*. You find banners and ensigns depicting *the King, and bloody axe and block*, intimating that unless the King would pass "the Bill, the whole Bill, and nothing but the Bill," he was to remember the fate of some of his predecessors in this and other countries. Now, gentlemen, I put it to you, whether you can believe the hon. and learned counsel when he tells you that the only reason why he comes here is to "vindicate the law." For what purpose do I trouble your lordship, and tax that patience and condescension which is always by a British judge awarded to a defendant situated as I

am? It is, to put it clearly before your lordship and before the jury, that there are a certain class of persons, and of writings, which are tolerated, and suffered to go unreprieved, without prosecution, and without punishment. Yes, my lord, when it suits the purpose, or when it conduces to the stability of an administration—we can have disturbers of the public peace, incendiaries—men who speak so as to lead to a subversion of the law—who propose not a repeal of the Poor Law Amendment Act, but a repeal of the Union which connects this kingdom with the adjoining kingdom of Ireland—we can have O’Connell moving through the country, forming and organizing societies in every direction, marshalling their members, counting their numbers, receiving their money—we can have this man publicly declaring that if they wanted a Repeal of the Union, some 50,000 or 500,000, or in some cases, two millions of fighting men were to go and petition the Crown. Yes, my lord, the Attorney-General does not consider that illegal. He does not come forward to “vindicate the laws” then. This Union may be threatened to be dissolved; two millions of fighting men may be paraded to compel Government to give to that gentleman as much power as he requires; but no sooner does a poor undefended minister of the Gospel of peace to man, without talent, save the talent of telling the truth fearlessly, and as far as he knows it—a man without name and

character, save the name and character of “fire-brand, and incendiary, and assassin, and madman, and demon;” a man without influence, save the influence of the widow’s prayer and the power of truth, which is great, and will prevail; no sooner does a man, situate and charactered as I am, step forward to plead the poor man’s right—to speak on behalf of the widow and fatherless, to express constitutionally his opinions and his views of the Poor Law Amendment Act, and the factory system, upon the case of the hand-loom weavers, and similar practical grievances for which he proposes constitutional remedy—than the Attorney-General comes down to this assize at Chester and prosecutes that individual, as he tells you, simply for the purpose of “vindicating the law.”

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My opinions are known—there need be no three indictments, no calling of witnesses, for your lordship will have perceived that, except the policemen, the witnesses were all cotton-spinners, or the children, or cousins, or other relations of cotton manufacturers, and the attorneys conducting this prosecution. The honourable gentleman reminds me that I have forgotten Tinker, who is a surgeon, a man appointed under the Factories’ Regulation Act, a man whose conduct I have frequently had occasion to bring before the notice of the country. I repeat, there would have been no occasion for this calling of

witnesses, this bringing together into that box a family party, for you have nothing else—the families of the Howards, the Ashtons, the Tinkers, and others directly or indirectly connected with this large family compact.

If the intention of the Attorney-General had been to defend the law, I submit that he should have proceeded against me for some speech, of which there could be no manner of doubt whatever. I have not done these things in a corner. Why is it, then, that no speech of mine, ever taken down by a shorthand writer, has been made the basis of a criminal prosecution? Why is it, my lord, that while even Her Majesty's Secretary of State has given out in the House of Commons on Friday last, that Stephens inculcates murder and the destruction of property; that Stephens declares in his printed sermons that under the Poor Law Amendment Act the divine command, "Thou shalt not steal," is of no force or obligation? I either have said those things, or not; I have either written and published them, or not. The Secretary of State has reported that I have said those things; and if I have published them, how is it, I ask with boldness and confidence, that the Secretary of State has not instructed the learned Attorney-General to proceed against me for such speeches and sermons? Why, my lord, clearly for this reason, that when read and examined, and weighed over—when brought to the touchstone of

truth, and applied to the standard of your books—my lord, when brought to the standard of *that* Book which is part and parcel of the common law of the land, it would be found I have inculcated no doctrines, and advanced no opinions, but such as are strictly constitutional and Christian.

* * * *

On the Monday cited, I left the neighbourhood where I reside ; no neighbourhood could be more peaceable ; having lived in it seven years, and constantly officiating amongst the poorest classes of the people from time to time, there never has been since I came into that neighbourhood, and up to the commencement of this prosecution against me—there never has been, at any one meeting that ever I was at, or on any one occasion, in which I had the shadow of a share—there never has been a single instance of a violation of public property—there never has been a single instance of a breach of the peace. The morals of the people have been amended rather than deteriorated ; their habits have become more domestic—and I am glad to see their political principles becoming more constitutional, and their religious principles more fixed and devout. This has been my aim, and this being known and read of all men in the district from which I came, I am dragged here, my lord, under this legal mask, for *it* is not the true face of the prosecution—this the Attorney-General has not

dared to exhibit in this Court—but under this mask alone, as though I were a party to the Convention, and to the disturbances of Birmingham, to the Charter, to annual Parliaments, vote by ballot, universal suffrage, and all the rest of that rigmarole, in which I never had a share. I only came forward to the men of Leigh, and there declared my detestation of the doctrines of Chartism, declared that if Radicals were in power, my views were such that my head would be brought first to the block, and my blood would be the first blood that would have to flow for the olden liberties of the country. Gentlemen, this is the individual who is now brought before you as a Chartist, and his proceedings made to appear as though he was identified with all that has lately taken place in the country: the learned Attorney-General told you that he did not intend to make any statements as to the recent occurrences in this county. The allusion was sufficient; the innuendo was thought by him to be enough to connect and identify me with them. As I said before, if I am to be tried, let me be tried in my own person, and not in the person of Chartism, of Radicalism, torch-light meetings, or things of that kind. If I am to be tried, let me be tried upon my own opinions—upon my own principles—upon my own authorized and published documents.

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I stand before you guilty of no other crime than that of endeavouring to reconcile the differences that

unhappily have existed between the masters and the men; and never since Ashton, and Staleybridge, and Dukinfield, places that have been mentioned so often in this charge, never since the first stone of these towns was laid has there been so much peace, tranquillity, good-will, and good understanding between the masters and the men as there has been during the seven years of my residence among these people.

* * * *

Five years ago, I was unconnected with any political party, unassociated with any individual, when simply in my closet I had forced upon my consideration, under the friendship of Mr. Howard and Mr. Ashton,* both of whom I have had the honour to call friends, and whom I should still have had the honour to call friends, had I not conscientiously gone against my own interest, reducing myself to poverty thereby, instead of living, as I did then, in comparative affluence. Gentlemen, it is because five years ago I took up the question of the circumstances and condition of the Factory labourers thus forced upon my attention, and the condition of the poor as affected by the Poor Law Amendment Act, that I stand before you to-day, and it is only in connection with those two questions that I have had anything to do in public. I am guiltless of everything else, and whatever your verdict may be, I have used no talent, no eloquence — I have not attempted to excite your

* Two millowners mentioned by the prosecution.

passions, to arouse your feelings, or to awaken your sympathies on my behalf. If I had had any favour to ask, I should have asked the postponement of this trial. If I had not been guiltless, I should have gone away until the time of next assizes—until there was something like calmness and tranquillity in the country. Put all these things together—look at them singly—and let the concentrated impression have weight upon your unprejudiced judgments, upon your loyal principles, upon your Christian emotions, as Englishmen and Christians ; as men who, with myself, fear God and honour the Queen and all that are in authority under her, and over us. In your own consciences before God, in the face of this country and of this Court, say whether I am guilty of this charge.

This speech occupied five hours in delivery and was listened to—reports of the day said—“with breathless attention by a Court crowded to excess.”

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL.—I hope, gentlemen, that, after this trial has terminated, the defendant himself will have no cause, in this instance, to complain of the laws of his country.

* * * * *

Some are of opinion, and amongst those I may mention the Duke of Wellington, Sir Robert Peel, and Sir James Graham, as well as Lord John Russell and Lord Spencer, that the Poor Law was highly beneficial—that it had a direct tendency to raise the

price of labour, to prevent industrious persons from receiving eleemosynary relief—to make the poor and industrious classes of this country independent of the overseer, and to give them a greater share in the enjoyments of life than they would otherwise have. Others, I believe honestly, are of a different opinion ; but it is wholly immaterial to this question which side is right and which wrong ; we are not now discussing the propriety of the Poor Law Amendment Act.

* * * *

Mr. Stephens says that he is a devoted friend to the ancient institutions of his country, insomuch that he regrets exceedingly that a form of expression which he says prevailed formerly in indictments is laid aside ; and is very much offended because in this bill of indictment it is not alleged that he was “seduced by the instigation of the devil.” But was this a meeting for the preservation of the ancient institutions of the country ? He says, you see, how very much he disapproves of the reforms that have taken place in our institutions. Now, was this an anti-Reform meeting ? Why, what is there in the banners that stared Mr. Stephens in the face, when he was addressing the multitude from the hustings, and of which he expressed no disapprobation, which animated his eloquence upon that memorable occasion ? Mr. Stephens says he thinks that the suffrage is now too much extended, and that it

was wrong to depart from the system of our ancestors, in which we had close boroughs, with ten or half a dozen electors, and according to which system a vast proportion of the people did not enjoy the elective franchise at all. Mr. Stephens says he approves of the old system.

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The more Mr. Stephens inquired into the matter in his cross-examination, the worse he fared ; and when he asked Mr. Hibbert, "Did I not say something more?" the answer was, "Yes, you said you would lead them on, and lose every drop of blood in your body in their cause, if there were a rising?" What was a rising? What did he contemplate? These industrious classes rising in a mass, and that there should be a sort of *Jaquerie* in this country ; that persons of small, or no property, should rise against those who had property, and that there should be universal pillage and plunder. . . . Find your verdict, gentlemen, upon the evidence that is laid before you, upon oath of the witnesses, since this trial began. If upon that evidence you can entertain no reasonable doubt of the guilt of the defendant upon this charge, you will not shrink from pronouncing a verdict of guilty—if he has so debased the holy character that he fills—if he has so forgotten his duty to his God and to his sovereign, I think that little sympathy can be entertained for him.

Mr. JUSTICE PATTISON then summed up : The

observations which the defendant had made were adduced in very powerful language, with great talent and ability, and with a fluency and power of language which I have very seldom seen equalled, and which would undoubtedly make, as they ought to make, a great impression on the minds of the jury, provided that they really bore upon the points in question.

* * * * *

The defendant in the most deliberate part of his address to the jury, that which was worked up with most eloquence of all perhaps, showing that there could be no crime at all unless there were a criminal intention—said that it was for them to see what his intentions were. The evidence of intention was to be collected by the jury from the acts which they found to have taken place, and whatever those acts were naturally and inevitably calculated to produce, that was to be taken as evidence of the intention to produce such results. We could not dive into the hearts of men, to see their real intentions there; and we could only ascertain it by attributing to men such intentions as their acts manifestly seemed to imply. The circumstance alone of this meeting being held at night and by torch-light, would not of itself be sufficient to justify them in saying that it was an illegal meeting, but it was one of the circumstances to be taken into consideration. The object of the meeting might be

fairly collected from the banners that were carried, and their inscriptions: "For children and wife we will war to the knife," "Ashton demands universal suffrage or universal vengeance." The defendant said he was of no party in politics, Whig or Tory or Radical, or any other description of persons; that he had nothing to do with Chartism, or universal suffrage, or the ballot. If that were so, it was certainly very extraordinary that he suffered himself to be at the meeting where these banners were carried.

When Mr. Justice Pattison had concluded his charge to the jury, it was twenty minutes to eight o'clock. The jury, after a short consultation, found Mr. Stephens guilty; whereupon—

The JUDGE (to Mr. Stephens).—Have you anything to say against judgment being now passed?

Mr. STEPHENS.—No, my lord, the Crown has had its own way throughout. I have nothing whatever to ask.

The JUDGE.—Joseph Rayner Stephens, the jury, after hearing the address which the Attorney-General made, the evidence on the part of the prosecution and the address—the very powerful address—which you have made to them, have found you guilty of attending an unlawful assembly, addressing to them seditious words, and inciting them to provide arms to resist the execution of the law. I am very sorry to have to pass sentence upon any person of your

talent and ability, and of your education. The sentence upon you is, that you be imprisoned in the House of Correction at Knutsford, for the term of EIGHTEEN CALENDAR MONTHS, and that at the end of that time you find sureties for your good behaviour for the term of *five years*, for yourself in £500, and two sureties in £250 each.

Mr. STEPHENS asked his lordship whether that sentence precluded him from the use of pens, ink, and paper?

The Learned JUDGE said he did not know the regulations of the gaol.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL.—My lord, he may have pens, ink, paper, and books, so far as I am concerned. God forbid that he should be debarred, as far as my influence extends, from anything that can alleviate the suffering which he must endure.

The JUDGE was understood to say, that the prisoner might be allowed to have pens, ink, and paper, always taking care, that it was forbidden to the defendant to write for publication anything of a similar character to that for which he had been convicted.

Mr. Stephens was then removed in the custody of an officer to the inside of the Castle, where he was lodged for the night.

The trial terminated soon after eight o'clock, having occupied about ten hours and a half.

The Government accounted Mr. Stephens a for-

midable speaker, seeing that in addition to "eighteen months' imprisonment," they exacted practical silence from him for five years. Mr. Stephens spoke upwards of five hours. There is quoted here altogether scarcely a seventh part of the printed report of the trial. The reader cannot fail to be struck with the sagacity and good judgment which mark the commencement of the address, and from which the orator never deviated in all the stately and passionate march of his speech. Very few of the persons indicted in those stormy times defended themselves. The other instance of distinction was that of Thomas Cooper, who displayed marvellous courage of defence, his trial extending over nearly three days. But Mr. Stephens's defence is unrivalled for its complete and sustained eloquence. The Attorney-General, Sir John Campbell (afterwards Lord Chancellor) was very much stung by what Mr. Stephens said of him and his political colleagues, and when he came to reply he retorted with elaborate bitterness. But as the Judge spoke of Mr. Stephens with great fairness and respect, and paid a very high compliment to his great ability, the Attorney-General made some tardy atonement by making no opposition to Mr. Stephens's request for some literary conveniences in prison. Mr. Stephens maintained throughout the same tone of independence and even defiance. When asked "whether he had anything to say against sentence being passed," he answered "I have nothing to ask."

In the report in the *Times*, he is represented as saying : "I have nothing to ask, and I leave them (meaning the Crown prosecutors) to do as they like with me," which is more likely what he did say.

While the jury were retiring, he wrote to his wife, and later dispatched a letter from the "Court House, Chester, Thursday evening," saying, "The trial is over. My next letter will be dated Knutsford. It is a lovely, healthful village. My sentence is eighteen months—not quite so long as we had made up our minds to. The judge was as urbane and courteous as he could be under the circumstances." In a subsequent letter to his wife, he informs her that "in all likelihood I shall remain at Chester Castle—that jail being much better than Knutsford. The judge promised to make the alteration." Mr. Stephens also said that "to my thinking my defence was not a good speech. I was not myself—fatigued with the previous business—and exhausted with reading so many quotations."

During the first period of his incarceration in Chester Castle his treatment was the same as that of other prisoners, of whom there were nine, detained there for similar political offences. A condemned cell being then happily vacant, the Governor allowed it to be used as a place in which prisoners could see their visitors. Not a very cheerful place of meeting ! When there were no visitors Mr. Stephens was allowed to take his meals in this exhilarating apart-

ment. He was treated with civility by the authorities, and said so, as he thought it due to them, and because he wished that his friends should not be under an impression that he was used with harshness when he experienced respectful kindness. He desired not to be an object of sympathy without cause, nor would he make pretence of suffering, or allow it to be suggested, when it was not so. One of his fellow-prisoners testified that his dietary was precisely the same as theirs. Being a gentleman, whose conversation was interesting and instructive, he became a favourite with the Governor, and ultimately had some indulgences, but whatever befell him he never complained. Feargus O'Connor began sending forth distressing complaints the first day of his imprisonment. Mr. Stephens murmured not; what he had done had been done deliberately, with his eyes open, foreknowing the consequences as serious. He was always fearless, and condemned O'Connor and other leaders, whom the exigencies of advocacy caused him to be associated with, because they were unequal to the emergencies they had provoked.

A political prisoner liberated before he was, sent him a versified letter of thanks for the benefits he and others had experienced at Mr. Stephens's hands. He had conversed with them, sung them German songs to enliven their days, and made them many presents of better fare, when he had means of doing it out of that supplied to him.

Among the letters which he received while at Chester Castle, there is one from his friend, R. B. W. Cobbett. It is interesting in itself, and from the account it gives of the Socialists, who appear not to have put their case into very suitable hands in putting them into his. He, as their attorney-general, was simply impressed by the caricatures of their doctrine which their adversaries had made. The Socialist theory merely was, that the improvement of the material condition of the poorer classes was possible, and would give them a better chance of happiness and virtue than they then possessed :—

“5, Marsden Street, Manchester.

“Aug. 29, 1840.

“MY DEAR SIR,

“Having been disappointed in an intention which I had of seeing you during the Liverpool Assizes (to which, contrary to expectation, I did not go), I write this by way of consoling myself for my disappointment. In the first place, I must explain how it happened that I did not see Mrs. Stephens when last at Chester. I thought I would call on her when my work was over, and I did not expect that that would last long, when it had once begun. Alas! how little did I know the *physical force* of my clients' lungs! They talked us all near dead, and the last two nights I was kept in Court till near midnight, and then I had to leave too early in the morning to call on Mrs. Stephens.

“The little Doctor called on me a day or two ago ; our meeting was not very cordial, owing to a ridiculous circumstance, which is as follows :—Some time since I wrote to the Doctor to request him to urge his Ashton constituents to pay my bill. To fill up my letter and amuse him, I cracked sundry jokes on his disconsolate state, advised him to write a book and call it ‘Reflections on Stone Walls,’ said something about the poverty of patriots, and gave him a quotation from Lord Rochester to the effect that it is part of man’s duty to God to get rich, as he cannot be honest if he is poor. To my infinite consternation the Doctor took all this to himself ! and back comes a letter breathing pistols, pikes, bullets, and all other kinds of destructive weapons in every line. Now, had I been ‘an evil-disposed person,’ here was an excuse for kicking up a row, ‘contrary to the peace of our Lady the Queen, her Crown and dignity ;’ but being a peaceably-disposed attorney, I put the letter in my pocket, which, thank God, it did not set on fire !

“I know very little how the world wags just now as to affairs in general, finding myself sufficiently occupied by attending to my own and my clients’ business. I rarely see a newspaper, and when I do I see so little either amusing or instructive therein that I soon lay it aside. As you see the *Times*, you have seen how Mr. Oastler’s affair with Thornhill ended. It was, I can assure you, quite to my and my client’s

satisfaction ; and I think the libellous tongues of our most libel-loving and respectable people will be now tied on that subject. By-the-by, I have just been reading in said *Times* a little of the stuff about the Jews of Damascus and Rhodes. I can't think why they should make such a fuss about Father Thomaso and the child, when all the world knows that since they crucified our Saviour they have amused themselves by crucifying his followers, not one at a time, but in the *lump* ! Witness National Debt, paper-money, &c. The document which they have addressed to the various Powers is certainly curious, but it is more curious to see the great 'Conservative' Church papers taking part with Jews. Oh ! Mammon, how wondrous is thy power !

"You must know that I am Attorney-General to the Manchester Socialists ! and, truly, it does not go much against my conscience ; for, however powerful some kinds of folly may be for mischief, I do believe that this one particular sort is beneficial in the way of burlesque. Of all the incomprehensible philosophy that mad imagination ever invented, nothing, I believe, ever equalled this ! What think you of mankind having acted contrary to Nature from the beginning of the world, and having done so because all circumstances (*i.e. everything*) have been contrary to Nature also, which unnatural circumstances have had an absolute power over the destinies of men, and yet Robert Owen can change all men and all things ; or,

in other words, can make all things as God meant them to be, but could not make them! Now, do you believe that any serious harm can come of this? For my part, I think it a very good satire on modern philosophy and folly.

“I am, my dear sir,

“Yours most sincerely,

“R. B. B. COBBETT.

“The Rev. J. R. Stephens.”

Another letter was from Mr. O'Brien, of whom mention has been made : he being then a resident in Lancaster Castle, had leisure to remember that he was under personal obligations to Mr. Stephens, which he had somewhat neglected, and his letter is one of inquiry, as it seems intended to ascertain whether or no estrangement had grown up between them :—

“Lancaster Castle,

“Sept. 4, 1840.

“MY DEAR STEPHENS,

“When I last had the pleasure of seeing you, I little thought that our next intercommunication should take place between Lancaster and Chester Castles. Though we have not corresponded, I was not, however, I assure you, indifferent to your situation, and much less to the malicious efforts of certain parties to destroy your usefulness, by undermining your popularity and influence. And if I have been hitherto silent on the

subject, I wish you to believe that such silence proceeded not from any falling off in those sentiments of esteem and friendship which I have entertained towards you.

“Though since we last met (about June 2, 1839) no correspondence has passed between us, I have had you constantly in my eye, and, since the commencement of your imprisonment, have made many inquiries and frequently heard about you. It gave me great pleasure indeed to learn that confinement did not affect your health or spirits, and still greater pleasure to learn that there was no disposition on your part to conciliate your persecutors by any unworthy concessions.

“My object in writing to you now is simply to let you see that I have not forgotten you, and to assure you that with respect to a certain affair between you and me, it would have been settled long ago, but for reasons which you may easily guess, and shall be settled the moment fortune takes a turn in my favour.

“My dear Stephens,

“Yours most sincerely,

“JAMES BRONTERRE O'BRIEN.”

There is much more to the same effect. Afterwards, another letter came from Mr. O'Brien, effusive and explanatory. It appears that Mr. Stephens had replied in the meantime in a general way, but mani-

festly without enthusiasm. The following is a copy of a receipt which appears among papers still extant of his :—

“Northern Star Newspaper.

“Mr. Stephens of Ashton has purchased twenty shares in the *Northern Star*, but is exempt from all expenses connected with the paper.

“Leeds, Sept. 9, 1837.

“£20 0 0

“FEARGUS O’CONNOR.”

This receipt shows that Mr. Stephens took a liberal part, as far as his means permitted, in supporting the undertakings intended to promote the public objects with which he was concerned. The letter of Mr. Bronterre O’Brien shows that Mr. Stephens’s political colleagues were in the habit of applying to him for loans.

Mr. Stephens’s father had told his son in 1833, “That he should die rejoicing that when the Gospel trumpet was taken from his mouth it would be blown much more effectively by him.” This gratification was not to occur to him in the way he wished ; but that he never lost affection for his son, the following letter sent to him at Chester Castle shows, and not less the characteristic steadfastness with which the writer walked in the “ancient ways,” and carefully qualified his approval.

“ Brixton Hill, Oct. 27, 1840.

“ MY VERY DEAR JOSEPH,

“ It gives me pleasure to hear that anything I ever said or did gave you pleasure. The communication you allude to was limited, first, to those letters in which you confine yourself to religion and morality, and keep clear of politics ; and, secondly, to the ease, freedom, purity, and eloquence in which you write the Anglo-Saxon language. Perhaps I may add, the endless variety in which you succeed, without any apparent effort, in placing the same topics before your hearers and readers.

“ With regard to your Magazine, I fear I can do nothing for you ; your political views and mine are wide as the poles asunder. That an obscure individual, like you or me, is called, or can reasonably expect, by agitation or otherwise, to revolutionize the long-established institutions of this or any other country, for good or evil, in the short period of our age, appears to me as visionary as would be an effort to construct a trumpet whose sound should wake the dead 365,000 years before the appointed time. One or one thousand souls may be converted in a little time, by the blessing of God upon the preaching of the Gospel, because the time of their probation is short and uncertain ; but national changes are slow in their progress—and the political husbandman must sow the seed in one generation, succeeding generations must water, and fence, and

weed, and watch it—and many ages enjoy the feast of harvest home. I will think of your request, and if anything should strike me you shall have it ; albeit, I am become like a bottle in the smoke, a shrivelled memorandum of olden times.

“ Your affectionate father,

“ JOHN STEPHENS.”

CHAPTER IX.

THE TWO KINDS OF CONSERVATISM.

WHEN the great questions of social injustice, which had so generously moved Mr. Stephens, were abated by time and legislation, his political sympathies were found to be with the Conservatives. Only persons were surprised at this who had never looked discerningly at the mixed nature of the political forces of which he was a leader. He was always a Tory-Radical on principle. "Tory-Radical" was a name first applied by O'Connell to the Chartist school set up by Feargus O'Connor. Daniel O'Connell was a discerning epithet-maker, and seeing that O'Connor-Chartists did the work of the Tories, and were used by the Tories, he, in party keenness, invented this term. O'Connor, in the first words he wrote in the *Northern Star*, which I have quoted, said, "Behold that red spot on the corner of my newspaper! That is the stamp—the *Whig* beauty spot . . . which has cost me nearly £80 in money."

This was the O'Connor way, and is the Tory Chartist way even unto this day. O'Connor ascribed every evil to the Whigs. Yet it was the more astute sort of

Tories who invented the taxes upon knowledge—who kept them in force and resisted their repeal. It was the Whigs who eventually abolished them, incited thereto by real Radicals—Cobden, Bright and Milner-Gibson, who could never have obtained their repeal from the class of old school Tories, so numerous in both Houses of Parliament.

O'Connor retaliated upon O'Connell by inventing the term "Whig-Radical," to designate those Liberals who more consistently looked to the Whigs for assistance, seeing that the Whigs were in favour of the self-government of the people—with however the drawback of being more than half afraid of trusting them with the necessary political power.

A Radical, as George Eliot depicts him in "Felix Holt," is a man who has heroic unrest under injustice, a strong sense of personal self-respect and social independence—who generously takes the part of the oppressed—who is content when the oppression ceases, but is without any political policy for rendering it impossible in the future.

Mr. Stephens never concealed his utter want of sympathy with "Political Charters," "National Petitions," "Sacred weeks," of cessation from work, and other devices of his immediate colleagues.

At the Colchester meeting a resolution was adopted reprobating the conduct of Stephens and Oastler for endeavouring to draw the working people from the duty which they owed to themselves and their

country.* This referred to the schism which had been commenced by Stephens, O'Connor and Oastler. It was denied that any schism was intended—but it was made. Chartist crowds following their passions, were unobservant that their forces were being broken in two. The wiser politicians saw the danger, and those who created it knew what they were about. The Tory inspiration of the Chartist organs would appear under amusing disguises. Here is an example: "For nothing in the present age is more remarkable than the number of its *splendid* discoveries. . . . Not the least notable is the discovery now made by persons of a *certain description*, relative to that splendid humbug the Ballot."† The "persons of a certain description" are named as the "Melbournes, O'Connells, and Humes—Whigs, Whig-Radicals and sham Radicals."

"Stephens, Oastler, and Fielden" formed the title of placards and poems current among factory workers. Stephens's name stood first in popular regard. The *Northern Star*, which naturally had great things to say of O'Connor, yet set forth with respect to a great Manchester meeting on behalf of the Glasgow cotton-spinners, that "the building resounded with cheers while Stephens, Oastler, and O'Connor" spoke against the Whigs—"were hurling defiance" is the phrase used.‡

* F. Place, "Working Men's Assoc.," vol. iii. 27, 821.

† *Northern Liberator*, quoted in *Northern Star*, Dec. 9. 1837.

‡ *Northern Star*, Dec. 23, 1837.

Though solicitous for the personal welfare rather than for the political emancipation of the people, Mr. Stephens was quite free from intending that their condition should be one of abject docility. He was for maintaining their self-respect and household independence. Infringement herein, always excited his indignation. He relates in the *Champion* that the daughter of a game-preserving rector and squire—both in one—in a parochial visitation entered a cottage from which the inmates seemed to be absent, and when gratifying her curiosity received from an unnoticed clown a most sonorous kiss, accompanied with the apology, “Lawk, miss, I took you for Mary—who would have thought of you looking into mother’s porridge-pot.” The father of the outraged damsel inflicted a fine of ten shillings, accompanied by a lecture on the ingratitude of thus insulting a maiden in the act of displaying such laudable anxiety for his tenants’ welfare. The whole village insists that the young lady’s “laudable anxiety” was to ascertain if any game had found its way from her father’s covers to his tenant’s culinary utensils. “What business,” asks the *Champion*, “has any stranger to intrude, unasked, into another’s dwelling? Poverty would conceal its rags and its wants, and resent the invasion of its privacy.”

A saying of Mr. Stephens, which occurs in the *Champion*, shows that he had an innate dislike of tyranny in politics or in piety; in employer or

employed. "It is an axiom with us, which God has told us in His Word, and history has confirmed in a thousand instances, that the man who becomes a willing thrall to another would be himself a tyrant, did time and opportunity admit of it. He who swore by Calvin would have burnt Servetus."*

What is generally overlooked, alike by journalists and other politicians, is the fact that there are two distinct classes of Conservatives, political Conservatives and social Conservatives. The political Conservatives care only for power for themselves; the social Conservatives care for the welfare of the people. Both care for authority, and when authority is in question they are united, and this prevents ordinary observers from seeing the difference between them. The social or generous school of Conservatives, believe steadfastly in the rule of the wealthy and the educated. They distrust altogether the capacity of the people to govern themselves. They are for a wise despotism; but it is a wise and just rule that they intend. Their feeling is that the happiness of the many can be best insured by patronage of the people, and they are favourable to such liberty only as is conducive to this end—provided also they can control it. They are friendly indeed to education, so far as it does not unfit the people for their control. To do them justice, the misery and wretchedness of the poor excite their strong com-

* *The Champion*, p. 5, Feb. 1850.

passion, and under the dominion of this sympathy they are practically Radicals. They show so much real kindness to those they employ in their workshops, or on their estates, that Radicals who are Radicals from suffering, rather than from knowledge of political principles, mistake them for Democratic Radicals, and are won to them. Indeed, the generous Tories are often better and kinder employers than the Whig or Radical manufacturer or landlord ; that is, than those who are Liberal without social sympathy. So strong are generous Conservatives in their compassion for the poor, that they will even abandon their political principles which constitute them Tories, rather than that the sufferings of the people shall continue. At a great meeting Mr. Oastler said, "Down with the Church and down with the State, if they shall combine to oppress the labourers, whom God says, are the first that shall be fed." "Again," says the *Star*, "did the room tremble when the 'Tory' thus expressed himself:—'They have endeavoured to rule us, and have failed. Now let the people make laws for themselves, and see what that will do!'"*

This was the generous Toryism of Richard Oastler ; and Joseph Rayner Stephens went as far. Many of the insurgent Radicals were of the same opinion. My valued friend, Thomas Allsop—who gave O'Connor his property qualification of £300 a

* The *Northern Star*, Dec. 23, 1837.

year in land, to enable him to take his seat in the House of Commons when elected member for Nottingham—was a Tory of this school, as also Robert Owen, the founder of English Socialism. He contemned politics as diverting attention from social arrangements, and as an impediment in their way. He saw no objection to slavery, when beneficently controlled. Sidmouth and Castlereagh lent a favourable ear to his plans: and Socialist schemes, so far as they promised to organize comfort and contentment, apart from politics, have always been approved by Tories in England; and in Europe, by Bismarck and Louis Napoleon, alike.

The following is the most singular example of a paternal Tory petition extant: it was doubtless forwarded to the Queen: the handwriting of the original is that of Mr. Oastler. It is worth preserving as a specimen of the art of educating grown men and women in all the docility of political children:—

“TO HER MOST GRACIOUS MAJESTY THE QUEEN,

“We are your loyal and grateful subjects, anxious at this as at all times to maintain the dignity of the law and the honour of the Crown.

“We place our hope in the powerful and benign shelter of royalty, convinced that your Majesty will listen with a willing ear to our just complaint and earnest prayer.

“After more than thirty years patient struggling—

after the endurance of many sacrifices—after the most careful examination into the truth of our case and claims, by Select Committees of the Houses of Lords and Commons and by a Royal Commission, all that we had affirmed was proved and admitted—in 1847 the Ten Hours' Bill was passed.

“That Act was received with gratitude. Even our enemies say that we have used it beneficially. No complaints have been made against it. We have felt its benefits. The ministers of religion have joined with us in thanksgiving for its results ; our reverend and beloved bishop has, with truly Christian eloquence, in the House of Peers, described those results, and supported our claim, but our tormentors grudge us the enjoyment of the benefits which we were taught to believe the law had secured to us.

“We were told, by one who was then our leader, that your Majesty rejoiced to sign that Act ; that, although our Queen, you did not despise our gratitude ; nay, that your Majesty was pleased most graciously to accept a very trifling but significant token of our loyalty in commemoration of that, to us, most important and joyous event ; nay, that your Majesty deigned, in terms we shall ever cherish and remember, to assure Lord Ashley—‘ You knew that we were grateful and loyal ! ’ ”

“The Act of 1847 is perfect. Why should it be repealed ? That of 1844 is imperfect, and requires

amendment; but it is asserted no English words can be found to secure us the benefit intended—release from the oppressive ‘shift’ system. We do not believe there is such paucity of words in our native tongue. By a *quibble* we have been deprived of the intended protection of the Act of 1844—by a *trick* it is now intended to deprive us of the Ten Hours’ Act of 1847.

“The two Houses being composed of many *men* have no regard to *individual* responsibility. They have *collectively* done that which as *individuals* they would have spurned. They have rewarded the guilty at the expense of the innocent, whom they have betrayed and punished.

“Your Majesty’s humble and grateful

“Petitioners will ever pray.”

Such language of child-like dependence upon the Throne had never before proceeded from any body of working people. Until the reign of Victoria, no monarch was felt or imagined to be much concerned about the condition of the poor. The Crown was only known to the people through its ministers; and its ministers were only known to the people as passing oppressive laws against them; taxing them, suspecting and defaming them when they sought redress. These poor petitioners state that they were loyal and grateful. They never had anything to be grateful for—or, if they had, they did not know it. They

are made to state that they are anxious at all times to maintain the dignity of the law and the honour of the Crown. What the common people knew of the "law" they did not like, and for the "dignity" of *that*, they would not be very solicitous, and they were too far from the Crown to know much of its "honour;" and were ignorant of the means of maintaining it. The petition was the work of other hands than those of the people. It is very gracefully expressed. Its simple eloquence is striking; but the passion of the authors of it betrays them into bad taste and indiscretion in one part, where they pour into the ears of the Queen coarse charges of "tricks" and "quibbles"—accusations, in fact, against some of Her Majesty's nearest advisers. The Queen may be solicited to bend her ear to the cry of humanity and justice, but it is alien to the dignity of her exalted position to recognize the heated imputations of party controversialists. The last passage quoted illustrates the instinct of personal government by an out-spoken distrust of the sympathies of a legislative assembly. The petition is a masterly specimen of the best and worst qualities of paternal Toryism.

The latter part of the petition is directed against Lord Ashley, and is intended to warn the Crown against him. About 1852, when the Factory Act was but a very few years old, an attempt was made to destroy its value by new legislation. Lord Ashley, who was entrusted with the defence of the

Act, for which he had long and generously laboured, accepted a compromise from the mill-owners, for which the petitioners disowned him.

Sadler, himself, was of the school which regarded politics as a scheme of compassionate patronage. His own system was described by himself as "the Paternal, its leading characteristics being to foster, protect, cherish, encourage, promote; its chief means of operation, the presenting to human beings the motives of benevolence and *hope*." He waged endless war against the political economists, whose system he described as "the Preventive, or repressive; its object being to repress, discourage, isolate, and limit; and its favourite means the inculcation of *fear*."*

The majority of political Conservatives think only of those legislative conditions which maintain their ascendancy as the governing class. The socialist Conservatives (using the term socialist in its natural sense, that of organized social life) are essentially generous-minded. They are for good government, for which their demand is absolute. They believe with Plato, that "the evils of the world will continue until philosophers become kings, or kings become philosophers." Therefore, if the King will not become a philosopher, these Royalist reformers will change the King, if that is necessary, in order that the people shall be well governed. This is the doctrine of the Tory-Radicals,

* "Life of M. T. Sadler, M.P." pp. 33, 34.

and was adopted by the Tory-Chartists who succeeded them.

The Radical democrat is quite a different specimen : he is clearly for good government, but has no intention of allowing good government to depend upon other people's good nature. He is not content to owe his prosperity to a happy accident, or his freedom to charity. He seeks security for his political and social welfare by securing a substantial voice in the choice of those who are to control it.

In 1838, *Tait's Magazine*, which had some Radical repute, contained a song translated from Béranger. The lines had not the finish of the French poet, but their sentiment, that of the feudal poor in all countries, was popular in that day. Their burden was, "Do kings or nobles care for us?" Two of the stanzas were as follow:—

When you behold a king enthroned
Or sitting at a foolish feast,
Or queens in luxury enzoned,
And treated like some heavenly guest,
Restrain yourselves, keep on your hat,
Make not the least degrading fuss,
For, when the truth is spoken,
What do kings or nobles care for *us*?

The working man should have one thought—
To be for ever free to toil,
And keep the wealth so dearly bought
To make his own hearthstone smile :
Some toil in this and some in that,
But o'er the great make you no fuss :
Their toils may soon be told—and what
Does any great man care for *us*?

These lines exactly explain the nature of the Tory-Radical mind, whose cry was for somebody "to care for them." A true Radical of the democratic type seeks independence. He does not care whether kings or nobles care for him or not: he does not want them to care for him: his business is to care for himself. He will serve kings or nobles, in any legitimate way, but he does not intend to impose upon them the task of taking care of him. He believes in government—as all men with common sense must—but he believes with Goethe that, "that is the best government which teaches self-government."

The Tory-Radical doctrine got itself expressed in what was called a people's paper, in these words: "It is not the transfer or the extension of power to make laws that we mainly want, but the *will* only to make, *only to obey*, such laws as are right. *This is the first and the great want.*"*

Right laws cannot be made by "will," but by knowledge only, and the greater the "extension of the power to make laws" the greater the chance that the laws made will be adapted to the needs of the greater number. Working-class politicians do not reason over-much in these days. They reasoned less in Mr. Stephens's time. Poverty and local oppression enraged the working-people. Mr. Stephens

* Letter to a Chartist on Result of Three Years' Agitation. *Prop. May.*, July, 1841. Edited by J. R. Stephens.

commanded them because he shared their rage with a mightier and better-instructed passion than theirs. He conquered them by his great sympathy: they never conquered him by their political principles—such as they were. Nor did they understand that he was an alien in their camps. And persons better educated, but equally unobserving, made the same mistake. Many Tories regarded him, and to this day ignorantly regard him, as a Chartist; while Chartists who understood their own principles regarded him always as a Tory. Mr. Justice Pattison, who tried him, displayed the same ignorance. He could not understand, he said, “how it could be, if Mr. Stephens was, as he said, a person disapproving Chartism, that he should be found at their meetings.”

Many Conservatives objected, without much reflection, to Mr. Stephens taking, as he did, the part of the poor. This is as unstatesmanly as the conduct of those who object to Radicals vehemently assailing admitted wrong to procure its abolition. What and where would the English Constitution be now but for its amendments? But for timely agitations, with concessions following, the political tornadoes which swept monarchy out of France, would ere this have swept it out of England. They who were foolishly accused of making revolution in this country, were alone they who prevented revolution. What would have happened had there been no generous Tories, who, like Stephens, Oastler and others, showed at their own

peril genuine compassion for the poor? But for them, and others like them, the Tory nobility would have been extinguished, as the nobility of France has been.

We continue a great nation because deep in the English heart—whether Tory or Radical—lies the love of truth, justice, and fair play. And near by, that passion for right, lie also in every true Briton's heart, the sleeping dogs of agitation and sedition who guard the right, and they spring up, sooner or later, in men of every party when the spur of real oppression pricks them. This heroic turbulence is in the heart of the Lords as well as of the Commons—in Tory as well as Radical—as political history records, in every volume of it. The gentleman, lay or ecclesiastic, the farmer as well as the labourer, are equally revolutionary when stung by wrong or ruin, and no other redress seems attainable. This is our English way, and it is ignorance and silliness to censure that manly energy of independence which is the characteristic of the Englishman in every land in which he is found. The maxim of Confucius is true to this day: "Advance the upright, and set aside the crooked, and the people will submit. Advance the crooked, and set aside the upright, and the people will not submit."

CHAPTER X.

LATER CAREER, CHARACTER, AND DEATH.

WHEN Joseph Rayner Stephens was yet a young man in the Wesleyan ministry, he was regarded by his compeers, and by the older and discerning preachers, as a person of great promise: then, activity of thought, soundness of judgment, and mastery in statement were manifest in him. Nor were these judges wrong. His future justified the expectations his early youth created. His later years were less publicly known than those of his mid-life, but this was because quieter times had come. The storm had subsided which had revealed him as one of its most conspicuous and potent spirits. The social tempest was allayed by concessions which his eloquence had helped to win. He always remained a sort of stormy petrel of industry, and whenever injustice of any kind disturbed its waters he was out on the waves.

A passage, written many years ago when Mr. Stephens's name was familiar to all politicians, and when the facts alleged could and would

have been contradicted had they not been true, will illustrate the purport of this story of his days. The passage in question is from the valuable "History of the Factory Movement," a book in the library of John Fielden Cobbett, of Edenbridge; the volume was presented to him by his father, John Morgan Cobbett, who was long Member of Parliament for Oldham. The author of this history states that "Joseph Rayner Stephens is a name familiar to the ears of all the working men in the manufacturing districts of Lancashire and Yorkshire. He is a man of small stature, but of great power; he is more than a man of talent and acquirements; he is a man of genius, and possesses the art of reaching and quickening the hearts of others. . . . Whoever can and will, in his own active labours, unite the theologian and politician, and become, as Mr. Stephens did, 'a political preacher,' will, in times of political excitement, increase his popularity and the means at his command for good or for evil. The phrase 'political preacher' is now a term of opprobrium, . . . yet the greatest preachers the Church of England has known have made continual reference to the duties of the 'rulers and the ruled.' At the head of the list stand the names of Bishop Latimer and John Wesley.

"The centre of Mr. Stephens's labours was Ashton-under-Line and district. In 1838 and 1839, he

travelled from the Tyne to the Thames as occasion required, and preached in the open air, sometimes thrice on a Sunday, to audiences numbering from five to twenty thousand, speaking at each service from one to three hours,* travelling during the week, and attending public meetings, at which he was the leading orator. It was calculated by Dr. Franklin, that Whitfield, the greatest out-of-doors travelling preacher of his day, might be clearly understood in the open air by 20,000 persons. Mr. Stephens has been distinctly heard on several occasions by as great a number. The sources of his influence as a political preacher were various. He was an orator, a logician, and knew how to appeal to the affections of the poor. It was his habit to raise himself, step by step, to an altitude of reasoning which all could see; he would then strike out in bold and homely Saxon against his opponents, depict in thrilling words the sufferings of the oppressed, and having pointed to the victims, he would appeal to the affections of the heart. Mr. Stephens was never more thoroughly 'at home' than when talking of

* It is recorded that Mr. Stephens would appear on Primrose Hill, London, at 11 o'clock, and speak uncovered in the rain for three hours, the vast throng staying to hear him. He would then announce that he would preach in Copenhagen Fields at 3 o'clock, where he would speak for more than two hours, and end by inviting his congregation to meet him at 7 o'clock on Kennington Common, where he would preach for two hours more. His discourses were always fresh, and special reports of them published in London at the time, stated that everybody could hear him.

the gambols of children, the affections of mothers, the duties of manhood ; by appealing to the innermost workings of the heart of each he commanded the sympathies of all. He received power from, as well as gave force to, the thousands of human beings, to whose hearts his words were welcome messengers of reproof and hope. This is the case with every really popular speaker ; hence the failure of the best possible reports of speeches to convey the electric influence which bound audience and orator. Few truer words have been penned than those of Hooker :—‘ He that goeth about to persuade a multitude that they are not so well governed as they ought to be, shall never want attentive and favourable hearers, because they know the manifold defects whereunto every kind of regimen is subject ; but the secret lets and difficulties, which in public proceedings are innumerable and inevitable, they have not ordinarily the judgment to consider. And because such as openly reprove supposed disorders of state are taken for principal friends to the common benefit of all, and for men who carry singular freedom of mind ; under this fair and plausible colour, whatsoever they utter passeth for good and current. That which wanteth in the weight of their speech is supplied by the aptness of men’s minds to accept and believe it.’

“ Mr. Stephens possessed the faculties which in action could not fail to give to the side he espoused

increased influence; but he was, for the reason stated by Hooker, more popular than he would have been had he been the supporter of Government; yet, surely, he advocated no measure for popularity's sake, for no man has greater moral courage, or knows better how to bear neglect or slander, or can laugh more heartily at the venom of personal or party sarcasm. It is due to truth to say that few men can more boldly oppose a multitude when he believes them to be in error. The religious and political tenets of Mr. Stephens were thus sketched by himself before his congregation in Ashton-under-Lyne, in a New Year's Day address in 1839; they are substantially a summary of his preaching and teaching." 'The battle which we are now fighting from one end of England to the other is not the battle which most men take it to be. It goes much further; it runs much deeper than most men have yet supposed it to do. It is not a battle of party against party for the time being; it is not a struggle for power or for place among men who, for the moment, are placed in antagonistic relation to each other. Much less is it a war of words—a mere strife between unthinking men about trifling points of faith; the idle theories, the dry attractions, or the circumstantial secondary relations of acknowledged law when applied to practice. No! It is the question of law or no law, order or anarchy, religion or infidelity, heaven-sprung truth and peace and love, or

hell-born withering atheism. . . . It is the battle, my brethren, of the book (the Bible) against the men of the world and against hell. If the book stand, they fall; if this book fall, great will be the temporary fall of the house of God, and you will be buried in its ruins. The lists are drawn—the battle is set—the field is pitched—deadly will be the struggle; and who is able—who feels himself willing to enter into that warfare? Pray God that he will teach your hands to war, and your fingers to fight.

‘I am well aware, my brethren, that I have long been charged—indeed, have always been charged—with a positive departure from the line of duty presented to the profession, of which I am a member. It is said that I have dishonoured and desecrated that holy office, by neglecting the purely religious and exclusively spiritual claims which the Church has made upon the time, the talents, and the influence of her ministers—and instead of this, or before this, or along with this, insisting on the obligation the whole Christian world is under to carry into actual, visible, immediate practice the plain precepts of that religion, whose first and last, and only law on earth is, that we should love our neighbour as oneself. It has been my practice, and been charged upon me as a crime, to apply the rules of God’s Commandments to various institutions of the social system in my own immediate neighbourhood, and in the country at large, to bring the principles and operations of the manufactures,

the commerce, and the legislation of this professedly Christian land to the standard of God's Holy Word. I have asked whether merchants, senators, and statesmen are amenable to any authority higher than themselves, or whether they are free to do what their own thirst for gold, or lust of power, may lead them to attempt to execute upon the poor, the weak, the unfriended, and defenceless portions of the community.

'I have gone on to inquire whether the practices of the Factory system, for instance, are in accordance with the precepts of our most holy religion—whether Christian mill-owners are justified in pursuing a system of manufacture which has made such a fearful waste of the natural, the social, and the moral life of our industrious countrymen, that is, has become a question not only whether the silken ties that should bind society in love can any longer hold her various members within its soft and peaceful circle; but whether the race itself—the human breed—be not so far degenerate as to threaten imbecility, idiotcy, or actual extinction to a most extensive and alarming degree'?"*

This extract from the "History of the Factory Movement" may be instructively supplemented by the opinion lately expressed by a distinguished public writer, Dr. J. H. Bridges, who says:—"In all that part of Mr. Stephens's work and teaching which strove to set

* "Hist. of the Factory Movement."

up a standard of simple, wholesome, family life, I most cordially sympathize. His protests against the exaggerated admiration of the mechanical and political progress of our time were full of deep truth ; his services in the great reform of factory labour were invaluable. All this I believe heartily. I am glad to remember that I stood by him during the Cotton Famine, and echoed his protests against the ignorant and purblind application to the hard-working mass of Lancashire men and women, when stricken by unforeseen disaster of the machinery of the Poor Law. On the other hand, I cannot go with him in the least in his vehement denunciations of the Poor Law, which I believe to be, when rightly administered (and it is the responsibility of the rate-paying inhabitants of each parish to choose wise administrators), a means of saving the mass of the people from degradation. Further, I think his criticisms of many of the philanthropic movements of our time, sanitary, educational, and other, were far too unsparing and violent."

The writer here quoted being officially connected with the administration of the Poor Law, naturally speaks of it under the wiser and more considerate treatment of the poor observed in these days, and which did not exist in Mr. Stephens's time.

In addition to the sentence of eighteen months' imprisonment passed on Mr. Stephens in 1839, he had to give sureties of £500 on his own part, and

two others of £250 each, for his good behaviour during five years. At the expiration of this period a very handsome present was made to him, bearing the following interesting and honourable inscription :—

TO THE REVEREND JOSEPH RAYNER STEPHENS,

Who, for maintaining, in perilous times, the

CAUSE OF THE POOR,

Suffered eighteen months' imprisonment in Chester Castle ;

THIS CUP*

(With the accompanying Tea Service

to

MRS. STEPHENS)

Was presented by admiring and devoted friends

at Staleybridge.

GEORGE GARSIDE AND ABEL WILLIAMSON,

Unsolicited, took upon themselves on behalf of this

DEFENDER OF THE POOR,

The responsibility of an

Unconstitutionally Heavy Bail, which terminated

On the day of

THIS PRESENTATION

Feby. 10th, 1846.

In the later years of his life Mr. Stephens was constantly busy with public questions which came within the scope of his ministry, or related to matters in which he had in former times taken part on a more public stage. As a friend of temperance, he would oppose the narrowness of total abstinence. Again, he would oppose the Sunday closing of inns, as a further restriction of the few social rights

* Now in the possession of his nephew, John Stephens Storr.

enjoyed by the people. He became himself an advocate of the union of Church and State, so that the Wesleyan Conference, which had suspended him for not holding this doctrine, had made themselves disagreeable prematurely. They might have seen that a man who was a Paternal Conservative would be sure to come back to that Church and State doctrine again.

After the Ten Hours Bill had been some time in operation, as has been already stated, the mill-owners proposed that a Bill should be introduced into Parliament changing its operations. It was this which gave rise to the charge of treachery against Lord Ashley, who aided this new Bill of 1852. The official statement of the friends of the mill-hands, as to the effect of the new measure, is the following opinion, given at the request of Mr. Avison, by R. B. B. Cobbett.

“ 1st. The period of labour of women and young persons is extended to ten hours and a half per day, except Saturdays, and on that day the period of labour is limited to seven hours and a half. Instead, therefore, of the labour being limited to ten hours per day, and fifty-eight hours per week, it would be ten and a half hours per day and sixty hours per week.

“ 2nd. The effect of the proposition is to render working by shifts and relays legal, between six and six, so that women and young persons may be kept at work, or about the mill, for twelve hours per day, and with one hour and a half off for meals.”

The proposal of such changes brought Mr. Stephens again to the front. He once more took the platform in defence of the poor workers, with unabated energy and disinterestedness. Some of the passages quoted from his speeches in a previous chapter, were made in this new campaign.

It has been said that he took much interest in defending the people against the grimness of political enactments souring the pleasant face of temperance. Regarding Dr. F. R. Lees as one of those agents of Puritanic rigour, he challenges him to discussion. Dr. Lees, who had many agreeable qualities and a social liberalism which brought him into jeopardy with narrow sectaries whom he officially represented, had his own views of the conditions of debate. Thinking Dr. Lees evasive, Mr. Stephens took steps which indicated his characteristic decision and courage on the platform. He issued the following placard :—

“ Staleybridge, Jan. 28, 1848.

“ To Dr. Lees.

SIR,

This is my last—Ay or No ?

I will meet you to-night, and in the Town Hall.
Will you meet me ? Let the bearers bring me word.

Proposition to be discussed—What you will.

Mode of proof—What you like.

Court of appeal—The assembled people.

Final decision—Their solemn and deliberate verdict.

Admission free, with or without ticket. Expenses of the Hall to be paid by me—the meeting to choose its own chairman, and to make its own regulations.

I am, Sir,

Your most obedient humble servant,

J. R. STEPHENS."

The placard continues :—

"I wrote a letter directly to himself, without any committee between us to garble or suppress the correspondence. I signed, and had a witness to, an acceptance on my part, of his deceitful challenge. I found out where he was—ordered a stand coach—and sent a deputation of two persons, from Ashton, in charge of my letter, with instructions to drive after him to Compstall Bridge as fast as they could. They found him there, delivered my letter, and awaited his answer, 'Ay or No.'"

The reader has seen that a noticeable feature in Mr. Stephens was his strength of will, and his belief in its power. He held that a man could do anything that he ought to do, if he had a resolute will. The following account of his early life, by Mrs. Earle (his daughter "Henrietta"), contains an interesting example of it :—

"As a young man he used to write all his sermons and speeches, and could not bear the slightest noise or interruption, but this habit became inconvenient, and caused him so much trouble that when he was

in Bristol he resolved to give it up, and that he might do so he used to go into the most busy and noisy parts of the public market-place and there compose his sermons ; and ever afterwards—as he has often told me—he had not as many notes of his many sermons and speeches as could be written on his thumb-nail.

“ His wonderful strength of will in this instance—and in many others I could mention—was very great. How well I can remember one Sunday at Staley-bridge—during the time of the Cotton Famine—when hundreds of people used to gather together to hear him : he had preached a long sermon in the morning, and at the close of the service said to me that I had better—as it was so late—go to the house of a friend for a little refreshment, and that he would also spend the interval with another friend who lived near. So we parted ; and at half-past two, on going to King Street again—where one might almost have walked on the people’s heads—I was surprised and alarmed to find that he had not arrived. I hurried to the house he had told me he was going to, and there found him slowly walking up and down the room, looking *very* pale. I learnt that in moving his chair he had caught his foot and fallen heavily on the floor—so heavily indeed, that the marks of the matting *under* the carpet were impressed on his temple. I begged him to go home and at once see a doctor, but he calmly said, ‘ No, my child ; I have

made up my mind to preach. Come with me.' Our kind friend made a skull-cap to hide the scar, and he proceeded to preach. The service had been commenced when we arrived, and the place was crowded to excess. My father at once began his discourse, and for two hours continued it without a falter, whilst I—standing all the time on the edge of the pulpit steps, listening to every tone of his voice, and from time to time giving him water to drink — watched and listened in anxious wonder to one of the finest sermons I ever heard him preach."

In 1866, the "Odd Fellows," at a meeting in Staleybridge, presented Mr. Stephens with an inkstand and a walking-stick. Mr. Charles Hardwick, the editor of the *Oddfellows' Magazine*, made the presentation, in acknowledgment of Mr. Stephens's defence of their Order. He had also preached them the most eloquent sermon on their records, which had added 200 members to their Lodges within a short time after its delivery.

He never lacked proofs of the regard in which he was held by the neighbours who knew him. On one occasion he spoke of this; it was at a public meeting at Staleybridge. He said: "I believe that, with perhaps one exception, I am the oldest member of the sacred profession to which I have the honour to belong, within the range of a district containing something like 100,000 inhabitants. I have

lived amongst you now for nearly twenty years, during which my attention has been directed, and my feeble services most heartily and earnestly devoted, to the amelioration of the social and moral condition of the factory population. You know how often I have spoken at such meetings as these, both here and elsewhere ; how much I have written in periodicals and other publications ; and how unmistakably I have, for this long space of time, laid my opinions on the factory question before you. And yet, it would seem, my fellow-parishioners give even a warmer welcome to one they have heard so many times before than to more distinguished persons from a distance. There must be a meaning in this ; and though I am not in the habit of noticing these marks of affectionate respect, I have a reason to-night for more especially referring to them. The much esteemed clergyman, who occupies the chair on this occasion, would hardly be prepared, after listening to the burst of applause with which my name was received, to learn that, so lately as the day before yesterday, a Manchester paper told its readers that everybody who knew Mr. Stephens was well aware how unworthy of credit was his testimony in matters connected with the subject of the present meeting ! Surely, in such an assembly as this, composed of all classes of the community, in a town where I have preached for about twenty years, my neighbours would not thus warmly greet a man

whose word could not be believed. . . . I have a right to be proud of those cheers.”*

Mr. Stephens delivered a lecture under the title, “What is it you Want?” As everybody wanted something, an immense audience assembled. The treatment of the subject occupied the speaker two hours and a half. At the end of an address so protracted, what most people would want would be to go home; but it was not so in this case. In the report, which was very long, the newspaper printing it omitted the various anecdotes, illustrations, and quaint stories of humour common with Mr. Stephens; and yet the report was of great public interest.

At the time of the Factory agitation, in which he was engaged, Mr. Stephens was also a frequent writer. The *Political Pulpit*, which contained his weekly sermons, was probably the production of the reporter. The discourses were long, were freshly conceived, and their issue had great popularity. In 1840 he published *Stephens's Monthly Magazine*. Later (1848-9), he edited the *Ashton Chronicle*. He also published pamphlets on local questions of interest. Another periodical, which extended to two volumes, was entitled *The Champion*† “of what is true and right, and for the good of all.” It is dateless; no

* August 10, 1849.

† There was a previous *Champion and Weekly Herald*, objects undefined, issued in 1837 and 1838, published by Richard Cobbett, 137, Strand, London. It was an important well-written Journal: attacked O'Connell and the Whigs.

editor's name is given. From an address contained in the first number, being dated 1850, it may be inferred that that was the year of the issue of *The Champion*, and from readers being requested to write to the Editor, at Ashton-under-Lyne, it may be concluded that Mr. Stephens was he, since no one else in Ashton was either known or suspected to be able to write as *The Champion* was written. Indeed, the title is Stephensesque. He was no "Champion" of *anything*: he defined what he defended; it was what "was true and right, and for the good of all." A letter from Mr. J. P. Cobbett identifies Mr. Stephens as the editor of *The Champion* of 1850.

"41, Bedford Street North, Liverpool,
Jan. 18, 1850.

"MY DEAR SIR,

"Your letter of yesterday with ye *Champion* came to me here (forwarded by my clerk) at 5 P.M. to-day. So it is not possible to do anything with it for ye *Courier* of to-morrow. I will do what I can to get all, or a part, in next week.

"I see you have inserted a letter from poor Crabtree. We considered his case, when he was leaving England, as one of a somewhat cruel *transportation*. A long term, probably for life, considering ye crime, that of poverty in his native land of 'roast beef,' and considering ye 'previous good character' which he might urge before ye court of cant, that of having sincerely aided towards accomplishing all ye good

which selfish hypocrites had been forced to take a part in. I hope he may be able to get back alive. And, meanwhile, I hope you have some other letters of his to publish, containing more details concerning the 'emigration fields.'

"Your reverence has chosen a text which I once adopted myself in a printed sermon: 'Weep not for ye dead.' It always struck me as being a perfect sermon in itself; one which few divines (save such as him of Ashton) can preach on without their own candle being put in darkness by the spark that they light it at.

"I am, my dear Sir, yours truly,

"J. P. COBBETT."

Mr. Stephens wrote as well as spoke, but not so well as he spoke. Instances are familiar to all men of reading and observation, of great orators, whose genius deserts them when they take up the pen; just as famous soldiers who are but as ordinary men in daily life, or in the senate—as Garibaldi, for instance, is, and who like him became suddenly wise and self-possessed in the din of battle and in the presence of real danger. So orators, whose literary animation is low, are filled with fire and splendour of words in front of expectant faces, and amid the conflict of menacing crowds. Our preacher and political orator also wrote verses; but undoubted vigour of poetic imagination, which illumined his

speeches, did not attend him in his efforts at verse, though some translations from the German had considerable vigour. The following lines are a fair example of his milder muse :—

SCATTER THE SEED.

Scatter the seed ! the seed of truth,
Believing it will grow ;
Look on the wilderness of truth,
It was not always so.
A garden once, it may again
A lovely garden be ;
It wants the sun, it wants the rain,
Of godlike charity.

Scatter the seed ! the wholesome seed
Of knowledge manifold,
And time will deck the flowery mead
With blended white and gold.
No leaf so green as knowledge flings
Unfading o'er the mind ;
No fruit so sweet as wisdom brings—
Rich fruit of every kind.

Scatter the seed ! the teeming seed,
Wide as the world abroad ;
Soon it will show itself indeed
The garden of our God.
We work and wait—we toil and trust,
Sure that the end will come ;
This wilderness of evil must
Be clothed with heavenly bloom !

Another example is that of lines written by him in an album, expressing that calm contemplation of death which was characteristic of his life and teaching :—

Oh, lost too soon—oh, loved too well !
 Too dear for death, farewell, farewell !
 One soothing solace yet is given,
 Tho' lost on earth thou liv'st in Heaven :
 Fond faith forbids us to deplore
 The loved, *not dead*, but gone before.*

In a letter dated 4th December, 1838, from Esaias Tegnér, Bishop of Wexiö, in Sweden, to Professor George Stephens, the Bishop says :

“I am of opinion that not one of all the previous translators whom I have had an opportunity of meeting, has penetrated so deeply into the fundamental spirit of the original, and so much respected its northern characteristics, as—yourself.”

In the preface written by Professor George Stephens to his translation of *Frithiof's Saga*, from the Swedish of Tegnér, published in 1839, to which the above extract refers, appears the following passage :

“Lastly, if this work has any merit—let the honour fall where it is due. It is to my dear and distinguished brother, the Rev. J. R. Stephens, *the tribune of the poor*, that I am indebted for having my attention turned

‘ From sounds to things ;’

and he it was who recommended to my eager study the literature of the North in general, and *Frithiof's Saga* in particular—which he unrolled before me by an oral translation—at a time when far away from

* J. R. S., from Mrs. Earle's, his daughter's, Album.

the shores of the North, and when the work was altogether unknown in England."

Mr. Stephens had the happy taste of domesticity, and many bright passages in his speeches and sermons, inculcating domestic affection, were consistently illustrated in his private life. His letters to his family were full of wise advice, or tender solicitude. When absent from home, preaching or speaking, he appears always to have taken time to advise with them on questions of personal interest, and to report to them whatever there was of public interest in his proceedings. His letters showed great affection for his nephews, John Stephens Storr and Rayner Storr. One of them is as follows :—

"The Hollins, Staleybridge,

"June 26, 1877.

"MY DEAR RAYNER,

"Clarant's 'Geometry' and your loving letter are both to hand. The book I certainly never saw before, and am now quite certain it never reached me till to-day. Thank you for sending it. I have read the preface, of which, and of the work itself, I will tell you what I think at an early date, although anything I may have to say on the subject will be given with extreme diffidence, and must be received with many charitable qualifications. I never gave my mind to mathematical studies, in part perhaps for want of a book like Clarant's, and a teacher like yourself. Before I write, will you be good enough to say

whether 'the work which is absorbing the best years of your life' is that of education in general, or the pursuit of the so-called positive or abstract sciences, of which geometry is one? Be assured that in the first, especially, I always have taken, and still continue to take, the liveliest interest.

"If you still feel it impossible to speak on the bereavement, do not call it "the loss" [meaning of his wife], you have lately suffered, you will understand why it was that your uncle did not obtrude upon the sanctity of your sorrow when he heard of it. I wrote a few words, such as seemed to me at the time to be seasonable, whilst your dear mother was hovering between life and death. When God speaks to us as He has spoken to you, the most expressive sympathy of those who know and love us best is *silence*. We must all of us, my dear Rayner, be willing as well as ready to die when the days of our life are brought to a close; and we must also be equally ready and equally willing to see those die with whose life our own life has been bound up, not with resignation merely, but with acquiescence, with radiant hope and with a chastened joy. This is what we have been taught, and if we have not as yet fully come to the knowledge of it, we should earnestly strive to attain its possession—this surely is, amongst other things, what is meant by the exhortation 'to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.' Your elder brother John, and yourself, with

your sister in the midst, are now in the front rank of the family of Storr—your fathers and mothers on both sides have passed away, and this, Rayner, is God's order—generation cometh, and generation goeth, but the earth—the abode of the whole family of man—abideth ever.

“Do not think of me as of one afflicted with ‘frequent indisposition.’ I am in all things, so far as I know, the same as you have always seen me, with the exception of being tethered by the feet through rheumatism, which now and then takes an excursion and visits the hands. If one chose to take it so, one might talk of this as a plague, as being wearisome and depressing, and now and then more or less painful and hard to bear. Thank God, this is not the mood in which I regard it. I am as merry as a lark; read a good deal, talk a good deal to the numerous visitors who come expressly to hear me talk, because they tell me they never hear the thoughts I set before them, either from books or from any of their own circle. Hardly a day passes without my being called upon—not by old friends only—but by persons whom I had never seen or heard of before. I name this to show you that I do what little good I can in my own small way. I have written a little in my time, and published it. I now and then think that the two or three volumes on my shelves might be revised and perhaps re-written to some advantage, but hitherto, for various reasons, I have not done this,

except mentally. Whether the books I have in my head will ever find their way to the printer I do not know ; I am rather inclined to think they will not.

“If you will answer the question I have put to you, I will try to write upon the subject before very long, though of all things in the world the use of the pen is the most irksome to me. I much question whether the scraps you are now reading would ever have been penned but for the good-willingness of my wife to write to my dictation.

“With our united love, I remain,

“My dear Rayner,

“Your loving uncle,

“JOSEPH.”

Later he writes again, saying, “Only a word, dearest of boys, and best of brothers, to tell you to think of me cheerfully, as well as lovingly. Call it gout, if you like ; in our olden speech it is written *gikt*, the very sight of which, by you, unpronounceable letters, will help in a shadowy way to give a better idea of the effect of the disorder. This is the seventeenth day I have been laid helplessly by the heels, during all which time I could only bear to have the bed made once, to wit, last night. I have had as much pain and weariness as I could very well bear, and there is this comfort in it all, that one knows all the time there is nothing the matter ; it is only throb, and sting, and dig, and lutch, and shoot in unbroken

succession. If, when you come to my age, you are to ail anything at all—please pray to God to let you have the gout. Here I lie, but nobody comes round the bed pulling long faces, shedding tears, asking me where I will be buried, and if I had better not send for the priest: on the contrary, I have lots of fellows who come to sit with me; they say it does them good to see me laugh, and listen to my conversation.”

Mr. John S. Storr writes, August, 1881:—“My dear uncle Joseph could not *half do* anything—he could fast and pray, or he could eat and work. Sometimes he would rise early and take very long walks: at other times he would sit up and read far into the night; take his breakfast in bed in the morning, and perhaps not get up until the afternoon. In company, too, he would oft-times keep the whole table in a roar of laughter, or, when on a serious subject, in rapt attention; whilst at another time—with different surroundings—he would be still, and seem to be dull and listless. He smoked much, and Turkish-bathed too much; for years he took these baths five or six times a week, often remaining in the bath, with some friend, for six or eight hours at a stretch. No man I ever knew had so keen a sense of humour, such a fund of humour in himself; so much solid bearing with brilliant dauntlessness; such intuitive perception with a faculty of observation rapid as thought itself. In fine, he was a Seer, with a delicate, sensitive, dramatic temperament, that

made him at a moment master of whatever situation he minded to fill. He could influence one mind, or carry away the feelings of thousands of his hearers at his will.

“He suffered for five years from occasional attacks of gout and bronchitis. During his last illness he was so full of brightness, that even his own wife and medical attendant failed to realize that his end was so near. A little while before his death he repeated slowly, but in a loud voice, the Lord’s Prayer, and met the ‘last enemy’ with a calm courage worthy of him.”

His decease took place on the morning of Tuesday, February 18, 1879. He was interred on the following Saturday, in Duckinfield Parish Churchyard. Of the family there were present the widow and her two sons, Arthur Cornwall Stephens, and George Alfred Stephens; Mrs. Neate, his niece; Mr. Rayner Storr, and Mr. William Helsby, nephews, and Mr. Alfred Earle, son-in-law. A vast concourse of people lined the streets, and crowded the churchyard, to pay their last tribute of respectful admiration and loving regard for the life-long labours of their preacher, guide and friend. The christening font, which used to be in Mr. Stephens’s King Street Chapel—a stone basin on a sculptured pedestal—marks the spot where he is laid. On the base is inscribed—

IN LOVING MEMORY OF
JOSEPH RAYNER STEPHENS,

Born March 8, 1805.

Died February 18, 1879.

“He hath done what he could.”

What he did is finely expressed in the words of
George Herbert—

“Be useful where thou livest ; that they may
Both want and wish thy pleasing presence still.
Kindness, good parts, great places, are the way
To compass this. Find out men’s wants and will ;
And meet them there. All worldly joys go less,
To the one joy of doing kindnesses.”*

These extracts serve to show the fine spirit of cheerfulness and fortitude which he maintained during his last illness. During the period which preceded it, I was for a time his guest, and witnessed the wise audiences he gave his visitors. Often he would, of his own choice and pleasure, continue conversing until past midnight. His talk was the most remarkable to which I had ever listened. Newness of idea, aptness of quaint illustration, singular richness of language, a picturesque eloquence devoid of all effort, gave the impression of a new quality of speech. His most frequent theme was natural education, and the friendship of little children. He had all the love of children which his friend Oastler displayed, but with deeper knowledge. He had much of the

* George Herbert : born A.D. 1593.

tenderness and sympathy of his Master, who said, "Suffer little children to come unto Me."

One of his public speeches, towards the end of his life, is itself an impressive vindication of his career, and shows the noble steadfastness of the convictions which animated him in the stormiest days, and sustained him in the modest dignity of life's close.

"I did not first become acquainted with the details of this question, nor enter into its support with those who at that time were its leading advocates, with any motive, as a previous speaker has said of himself, of popularity. I was then a retired, studious young man, following the duties of my profession; and while I was endeavouring to discharge the duties of that profession my attention was directed, by the study of the Word of God, to the condition of the people around me, and my mind was affected by that condition. I began to see into, to examine, the Factory system, and to try it according to the principles which should regulate our morals. I considered that I was bound to spread, through the length and breadth of the land, and enforce the precepts of Jesus on people of all classes and all conditions, even the lowest. It was here, sir, and amid these scenes of thought and meditation, that my young heart first—I trust under the direction and blessing of the good God—nursed and prepared itself for some little, I hope not unworthy, service in the great campaign in which I trust you all are fellow-soldiers. Since first I began

to advocate the cause of the poor, oppressed, and all but defenceless, factory child, if ever a shadow of doubt or misgiving entered my breast, it was dispelled and dispersed by the next wind or the next sun.

* * * * *

“I wish not to live in excitement ; I am not fond of popularity. I am not a public man by nature or by choice. I would rather be at home with my children, my books, and my cattle, and discharging the duties of my profession. But I know what it is to surrender my natural tastes, my congenial pursuits in my own loved spot of quiet domestic bliss ; for I can and will endeavour to be where conscience calls me to a duty.”

In a poem which he wrote, a traveller questions a stranger as to the source of rest, and receives the answer which Mr. Stephens himself had sought and found :—

Thou seekest peace ?
Peace dwelleth here.
Then here repose,
Where the yew trees wave
With the moan of the winds
O'er the peaceful grave—
Peace of the living,
Dwelleth thou here ?”
Stranger, thou findest it
Deep in thy breast ;
There dwelleth rest.

It is chiefly by his orations that he will be

remembered as one of the men of mark of his time. How great was the influence he exercised by his speech is proved by the fact that the Government required to keep troops in the north, chiefly to allay the fierce tumults of indignation evoked by his tongue.

There were other political leaders of great popularity with the men of Lancashire. But they came and went—Mr. Stephens remained. He, too, might have gone. During many years all England was open to him. Personally he might have had a more advantageous lot in many towns, but he elected to minister among those given to him to guide. His sincerity was never questioned by colleagues who had a talent for distrust. When funds were needed for his trial, this was said: "If Mr. Stephens's talents could be purchased, they are worth thousands a year to either Whigs or Tories; and yet the Radicals allow him to be the sport of a faction: whilst his only crime is attachment to the poor! He that giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord. Therefore, lend God's minister wherewith to save God's people."*

This was the appeal made on behalf of Mr. Stephens in the days when he was threatened with the penal consequences which befel him. After his liberation, he separated himself from Feargus O'Connor, because it was not in his nature to be a partizan of the democratic views of which the Chartist party mostly

* From the *Northern Star*, F. Place, vol. ii., 27, 820. "W. M. A.," p. 18.

believed themselves to be in favour. Now that no support from that party could accrue to him, he sought none from the party he aided. All the same, he was faithful to the social welfare of the people, which he always had at heart. With what fidelity he did this, and how much he was trusted because the people had reason to believe in his fidelity and unselfishness, is attested by what took place at that time.

In 1864, the Leeds Ironworks posted notices at Pottery Fields, Monkbridge, Bowling, Lowmoor, Perseverance, Farnley and Clarence, that all workmen must sign "the Declaration" on pain of dismissal—"That they were not members of any society or club for regulating in any way the hours or terms of labour, where they themselves worked or elsewhere?" This insolence of capital to labour Mr. Stephens counselled the men to resent, and the employers not to insist upon. It would be owned even by his enemies that at no time was he to be turned from his purpose by considerations personal to himself. He never thought anything of the maxim—

Success, that owns and justifies all quarrels,
And vindicates deserts of hemp with laurels ;
Or, but miscarrying in the bold attempt,
Turns wreaths of laurels back again to hemp.

He cared nothing for the "laurel," and he never feared the "hemp." Space would not suffice to tell in how many contests he engaged on behalf of the people. We have seen what he did in regard to

tyrants in high quarters. He engaged, with no less generosity and courage, with local tyrants in his own neighbourhood, where success could bring him nothing but the thanks of the poor who had nothing else to give, and was sure to bring him discomfort and dislike from his powerful neighbours, with whom he would have preferred to have continued on good terms. Very few men show the courage, disinterestedness, and self-denial involved in this sort of service. Local magistrates are not always wise, and are sometimes prejudiced and unjust: Poor Law Guardians are often selfish, ignorant and insolent, and do brutal things to the poor: these people Mr. Stephens unhesitatingly attacked.

Young women, insulted by employers or by chairmen of Boards of Guardians (as sometimes occurred), went to him,* and never found him to fail them. He was "their friend when other friend they had none." Christianity has heroisms and noble inspirations. Mr. Stephens never forgot that he was a minister of God, and his duty was to stand by the weak against the strong at any peril to himself—and he did it; and it was his gladness and reward to find that when those who should have honoured him forsook him, many such afterwards saw their error, and were grateful to him all their days. Plutarch says, "Good fame is like fire. When you have kindled it, you may easily preserve it; but if you extinguish it, you will not

* *Northern Star*, Dec. 23, 1837.

easily kindle it again." Mr. Stephens could always kindle it again. He commanded his popularity by his heart and not by ambition. In his mid-career he had powerful friends in every part of the country—in Parliament and in the Court—and had he cared for himself, he might have commanded a place of honour and opulence ; but he preferred "to dwell among his own people," and died rich only in the gratitude of the poor and in the proud memories of the services he had rendered to his country.

On one occasion, two gentlemen came down to Staleybridge from the Carlton Club, and said they wished Mr. Stephens to stand for a certain borough, and that his election to Parliament should cost him nothing. They added that they wanted to keep the seat until a particular person was ready to take it. Mr. Stephens opened his door, and desired these gentlemen to leave his house at once.

At another time, a rich mill-owner called on Mr. Stephens in the early part of the Factory agitation, and said he would give him £1,000, and build him a new chapel, if he would but hold his tongue on the question. Mr. Stephens answered: "Yes, and *you* would get £1,000 a-year more out of the blood of those poor factory children." He, too, left somewhat more hurriedly than he entered Mr. Stephens's modest abode.

Mr. Stephens resembled Cromwell in this, that his religious fervour was the source of his power. He

allured a class of men whom few other agitators interested—working people of religious convictions, men who will go very far when moved by passion and faith. He was a political preacher : his generous inspiration was religious and not political. His great conviction was that it was the duty of a minister of God to stand up like the Prophets of old in defence and protection of the people against whoever might be their oppressors, masters, judges or kings. He went among politicians, but was never of them. He spoke in defence of the People's Charter, but it was because no other means seemed open whereby the people could be helped, save by giving them the power to choose better rulers than those they then had—men whose hearts were steeled against the cry of the poor.

A popular advocate may be moved mainly by vanity ; but such persons are known by this mark—they do not put themselves forward where there is real danger, and they bring their zeal well under control when indictments are about, out of which it is not possible to wriggle. Applause was very welcome to Mr. Stephens, and gave him great pleasure. He took pride in distinction, but he had genuine passion as well as pride. His nature was brave and defiant. His sense of duty, as a preacher of religion, was his strong and abiding conviction. It was plainly so, for it moved him when the voice of applause had long ceased, and his

splendid services no longer occupied the chief place in the memories of men.

In the great agitations in which he took part, he undoubtedly excelled all other public speakers. He had the spring of a lion in his speech. When he rose, it was as though a new power had appeared on the platform. He had not only the faculty but the consciousness of the orator. Speaking was his natural element, and he had no misgiving that he should acquit himself with clearness and force. In 1863 he was the chief speaker at a great meeting at Staleybridge, called to memorialize Sir George Grey on behalf of unemployed operatives. Mr. Stephens said : " I am now an old man, and though for forty years of my life I have had to speak on almost every subject of religious, social, and political interest, I never rose, either here or elsewhere, with a heavier heart. Not that what I have to say does not lie very clearly before me, nor that I have any fear that words will not come to me at will in which to give meaning to my thoughts. I both know what is on my mind, and I am at no loss how to utter it." All this was true, and spoken with as much confidence as though the promise was made to him that, in the hour in which he had to speak, it should be given to him what he should say. Like a great orator, who acquired fame after him—W. J. Fox, of the Anti-Corn-Law League—Mr. Stephens could " think upon his feet." Mr. Fox once told me that speaking was to

him an inspiration, and all the powers of his mind came to him then. This was the case with Mr. Stephens, who not only spoke better than he wrote, but better than most men can write. To the last days of his life his remarkable powers of expression not only remained unimpaired, they seemed even more perfect. His familiar conversation was like a fruitful tree of which the produce never appeared too much, it was so good; vigorous and picturesque speech was an endowment of his family: in him it had become an art. He was not a man of mere words—he had ideas; but being a thinker who pursued thoughts for their own sake, he often, in later years, carried his hearers into regions where he alone could see the way, and they lost interest. But on questions of every-day life no one could listen to him without admiration. His expression was so perfect, his illustrations were so ready, so quaint, and so vivid, that his words seemed alive. The meaning of some men's speech wriggles its dubious way under a heap of words, like a snake in brushwood: now it is outside, soon it is seen glistening among the branches, next you hear it rustling among the leaves, and at last it shoots through some hole, and you see it no more. Mr. Stephens's meaning was always palpable and always in sight. That was because his life had been passed in contest with powerful adversaries—only to be combatted with palpable and invincible weapons. Love peace as he might, all the powers of his

soul were aflame when right, as he conceived it, had to be championed against what he believed to be wrong. It was as though the words of Thomas à Kempis were always in his mind : "Be therefore prepared for battle if thou desirest to obtain victory. The crown of patience cannot be received where there has been no suffering. If thou refusest to suffer, thou refusest to be crowned ; but if thou wishest to be crowned, thou must fight manfully and suffer patiently. Without labour none can obtain rest ; and without battle there can be no victory."

As respects theological and political principles, I differed from Mr. Stephens very widely ; but him I respected very much. In choosing principles, one regards their tendency and their truth ; in judging men, we estimate them by their motives and their character. Conservative and Liberal principles are but as glasses, through which men see public affairs. Conservative glasses are to my mind short-sighted, and do not enable the user to see more than his own relation to the objects he inspects ; while Liberal glasses I conceive to have a longer vision, and bring the people and their interests into view, and reveal things good for progress as well as party. That Liberalism is of a very poor sort, which cannot recognize nobility of conscience and integrity of aim in those of entirely opposite schools of thought and action. Infallibility is rarely met with among men, but honour is an attribute of all parties.

A monument to Sadler was erected in Leeds in 1835, at a cost of £700. It stands at the entrance of what was then spoken of as the "New Church." Thirty years later a statue of Richard Oastler was put up in Bradford, in honour of the champion of factory children. It is surely meet that a monument should stand in the park of Staleybridge, in commemoration of the great friend and advocate in the same merciful movement. Mr. Stephens was faithful to it during nearly half a century—his mighty eloquence advanced it, and he incurred peril to secure its triumph.

THE STEPHENS'S MEMORIAL FUND COMMITTEE.

[*Preliminary.*]

Thomas Birtwistle, Esq., Ac- cington.	Mr. George Mitchell, Staly- bridge.
Dr. John H. Bridges, Wimble- don.	Mr. James Platt, Stalybridge.
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John Holmes, Esq., Leeds.	Mr. Thomas Stanfield, Staly- bridge.
George Jacob Holyoake, Esq., 22, Essex Street, Temple.	Mr. Henry Stevenson, Staly- bridge.
Samuel Kydd, Esq., 5, Mitre Court Chambers, Temple.	Mr. Swann, Stalybridge.
William Radcliffe, Esq., Mossley.	Mr. David Taylor, Stalybridge.
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Rayner Storr, Esq., Haslemere, Surrey.	Mr. Joseph Thomas, „
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Mr. Hellion Lockwood, „	Mr. Joseph Newsome, Batley.
	Mr. George Saxon, Dukinfield.
	Mr. John Waring, Dewsbury.

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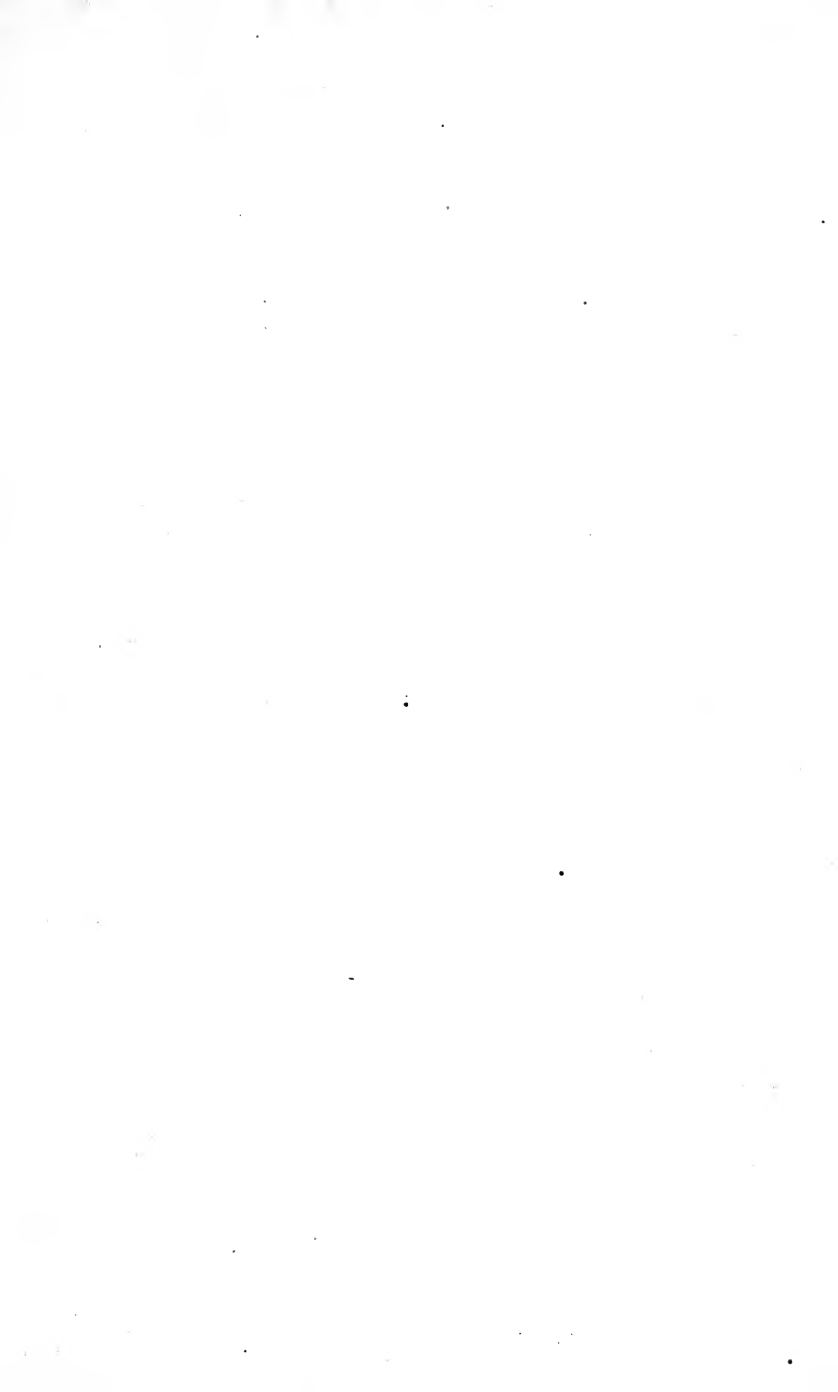
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